Trust, Value and Loyalty in Relational Exchanges Between Students and Higher Education Institutions

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This study replicates Sirdeshmukh, Singh and Sabol’s (2002) trust-value-loyalty model for relational exchanges. The replication addresses some important limitations presented by the authors in their original study and responds to their call for additional research in different service contexts and with varying sampling procedures to further validate their model. Although some of the results found in the relationships tested in this replication differ from those presented in Sirdeshmukh et al., most of their main hypotheses are generally supported. Thus, this replication validates the trust-value-loyalty framework developed by Sirdeshmukh et al. to be used in the context of relational exchanges between Brazilian HEIs and their students.

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Initial Results

After initial interviews with community leaders, we found that from their point of view, immigration policy was playing a role in the acculturation process. One employer noted that “They can’t even leave their house without thinking about the chance of being sent home.” An advertising manager for a local Hispanic newspaper noted that “Policy changes everything, where to live, who to be friends with, where to go.” Conversations with actual immigrants have uncovered a similar pattern. An oilfield hand who has been working in the US for 6 years noted that (translated) “I cannot even take my friends to buy groceries at the store.” This research will help understand this phenomenon.

Work Cited


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Many scholars have tried to model the processes by which consumers maintain relational exchanges with firms and how these processes are linked to customer loyalty. What seems to emerge as a common ground in this stream of research is that consumer trust plays a central role in fostering successful relational exchanges. In other words, consumer trust has proven to be positively and directly related to customer loyalty. Morgan and Hunt (1994), pioneers in this area, developed and successfully tested a model in which relationship commitment and consumer trust are presented as key mediators in successful relational exchanges. They defend that customers with strong relationships with providers have higher levels of trust and commitment, and that trust and commitment occupy a central role in the formation of their attitude towards those providers. Similarly, Garbarino and Johnson (1999) proposed and tested a model that puts consumer trust and commitment as central intermediate constructs between consumers’ attitudes and future intentions that aim to explain successful relational exchanges for customers who have a high relational orientation to the provider. Most recently, Sirdeshmukh, Singh and Sabol (2002) proposed a model that uses a multidimensional conceptualization of trustworthiness divided into two main fronts (frontline employees and management policies and practices) and presents value as a key mediator between consumer trust and loyalty. They tested their model in two different service contexts: retail clothing and nonbusiness airline travel. They found that consumers’ appraisals of the behavior of frontline employees and the practices and policies of management, both evaluated in terms of competency, benevolence, and problem solving, were related to consumer trust in the provider under consideration for both service contexts examined. Further, value completely mediates the relationship between trust in the frontline employees and loyalty in the retail clothing context and partially mediates the relationship between management policies and practices and loyalty in the nonbusiness airline travel context.

Although the role of consumer trust in enhancing relational exchanges has occupied a prominent position in the minds of practitioners and marketing academics, a lot still needs to be done to validate frameworks that attempt to model the trust-loyalty relationship and are sensitive to contextual differences. For instance, one of the major gaps of most of the studies that try to model relational exchanges is that they might have limited generalizability. Indeed, many authors acknowledge this limitation in their studies (e.g.: Crosby, Evans, and Cowles, 1990; Sirdeshmukh, Singh and Sabol’s 2002). However, generalizability is something that can be easily accomplished by replication studies (Easley, Madden, and Dunn, 2000). Easley, Madden, and Dunn (2000) posit that “theory development and refinement have suffered from the lack of an explicit replication tradition in research” (pg. 83).

The primary objective of this research is to replicate the trust-value-loyalty model for relational exchange developed by Sirdeshmukh, Singh and Sabol’s (2002) by addressing some of the most important limitations presented by the authors in their original article. First, it aims to test the generalizability of the original study by testing the model in the context of HEIs (instead of retail clothing and nonbusiness airline travel) in a different cultural context (in Brazil instead of the United States) and at a different time (four years after the original article was published). Second, it attempts to reduce any sample size bias that might have occurred in the original study. The sample used in the