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REVIEW ARTICLE

RELATIONSHIP MARKETING AND CUSTOMER RETENTION: *THE ROLE OF SATISFACTION AND TRUST IN THE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE BRAND IN AN INTEGRATIVE REVIEW*

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: relationship marketing is often associated with loyalty, yet satisfaction, trust, loyalty and repurchase are frequently treated as automatic steps in a single chain. **Objective:** to analyze how the literature characterizes the relationships among relationship marketing, satisfaction, trust and customer retention in the bond with the brand. **Methods:** qualitative, exploratory-descriptive integrative review, with intentional selection of four analytical studies supported by foundational literature. **Results:** personalized communication, service and kept promises favor positive experiences and trust; satisfaction and trust, however, do not guarantee retention, which is affected by price, convenience and alternatives; retention, loyalty, repurchase and repurchase intention are distinct concepts. **Conclusion:** the article proposes a conceptual scheme showing where the chain breaks and a research agenda.

1 INTRODUCTION

The contemporary market changes continuously, driven by wider access to digital technologies, information and communication channels. In this scenario, offering quality products at competitive prices, in isolation, may not be enough to sustain lasting bonds, and organizations need to develop strategies capable of differentiating them and strengthening the relationship with their customers. Relationship marketing gains relevance precisely because it shifts the focus from the isolated transaction to the construction and maintenance of long-term relationships, supported by an understanding of consumers' needs, expectations and behaviors (Augusto & Almeida Júnior, 2015).

Two dimensions occupy a central position in this discussion: satisfaction and trust. The first expresses the evaluation consumers make of their experience in light of what they expected (Oliver, 1980); the second, the

confidence they place in the company's credibility and in its ability to keep its promises (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Alves et al. (2017) discuss the articulation among experience, satisfaction, trust and loyalty, and Moraes et al. (2024) indicate that practices such as personalized communication, close service, the offering of benefits and the building of trust may contribute to customer retention.

What is missing, however, is a reading that puts these elements in dialogue without treating them as synonyms or as automatic steps in a chain. Satisfaction is not loyalty (Oliver, 1999), repeat purchase is not commitment (Dick & Basu, 1994) and repurchase intention is not actual repurchase. Confusion among these concepts leads to managerial promises that are easy to state and hard to sustain, such as the claim that satisfied customers necessarily become loyal. This article seeks to dispel part of this confusion.

The objective is to analyze, through an integrative review, how the scientific literature characterizes the relationships among relationship marketing, satisfaction, trust and customer retention in the bond with the brand. The research question that guides it is: how does the literature characterize the relationships among relationship marketing practices, satisfaction, trust and customer retention? To answer it, the study (a) identifies the main relationship practices described in the literature; (b) examines their relationship with satisfaction and trust; (c) distinguishes customer retention, loyalty, repurchase and repurchase intention; and (d) discusses how these constructs are articulated and where this articulation breaks down.

The contribution is conceptual and practical. Conceptually, the article proposes a scheme that organizes the constructs and indicates the points at which the chain ceases to be guaranteed. In managerial terms, it offers criteria for a company to assess the quality of the relationship beyond the number of purchases. After this introduction, Section 2 describes the procedures; Sections 3 to 6 develop the four thematic axes; Section 7 integrates the synthesis; Section 8 discusses convergences, tensions, implications and gaps; and Section 9 presents the final considerations.

2 METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

2.1 Research design

This is bibliographic research, with a qualitative approach and an exploratory-descriptive character, conducted as an integrative review. According to Gil (2002), bibliographic research develops from material that has already been produced, chiefly books and scientific articles, which makes it possible to examine different perspectives on the phenomenon. The integrative review is appropriate when the aim is to gather and compare works of a theoretical and empirical nature on the same topic, for a broader understanding than that of isolated studies (Torraco, 2005; Whittemore & Knafl, 2005). The character is exploratory, because it broadens understanding of the problem and of the relationships among the constructs, and descriptive, because it systematizes and interprets how the literature characterizes them.

2.2 Corpus and survey

The survey was carried out through an academic search tool (Google Scholar), in October 2026, with the descriptors "marketing de relacionamento" [relationship marketing], "fidelização de clientes" [customer retention], "satisfação do cliente" [customer satisfaction], "confiança na marca" [brand trust], "relacionamento com a marca" [relationship with the brand] and "lealdade do consumidor" [consumer loyalty], isolated and combined. The selection was intentional, and not exhaustive: there was no systematic search in multiple databases, no application of Boolean operators to form an initial universe of records and no count of records per stage. The corpus was organized in two layers, of different weights.

- **Analytical layer.** Four recent or applied studies, examined in detail and synthesized in Table 1: Augusto and Almeida Júnior (2015), Alves et al. (2017), Eckert et al. (2019) and Moraes et al. (2024).
- **Foundation layer.** Reference works on satisfaction, trust, loyalty and relationships, used to define constructs and interpret the findings, but not subjected to systematic extraction: Oliver (1980, 1999), Morgan and Hunt (1994), Dick and Basu (1994), Sheth and Parvatiyar (1995), Garbarino and Johnson (1999), Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001), Sirdeshmukh et al. (2002), Seiders et al. (2005) and Palmatier et al. (2006).

Table 1 — Studies in the analytical layer: nature, context and contribution

Study	Nature and context	Contribution to the review	Limit for this review
Augusto and Almeida Júnior (2015)	Descriptive bibliographic review; no empirical data.	Presents relationship marketing as a retention strategy, with emphasis on CRM, segmentation and satisfaction as a necessary, but not sufficient, condition of loyalty.	Relies on secondary sources; accessibility to small businesses is asserted, not demonstrated.
Alves et al. (2017)	Cross-sectional field study; 823 supermarket customers (Campina Grande, PB).	Examines how experience, satisfaction, trust and commitment favor loyalty to private-label brands.	Specific context (private labels, one city); the reading here is based on the journal abstract.
Eckert et al. (2019)	Survey; 410 online consumers; structural equation modeling.	Shows that security, privacy and information quality raise trust, and that trust raises repurchase intention.	Online context; measures intention, not actual behavior; partial abstract consulted.
Moraes et al. (2024)	Systematic review; various sectors.	Points to personalized communication, individualized service, CRM and reward programs as practices that sustain loyalty.	Synthesis of heterogeneous studies; sectoral results not detailed here (abstract consulted).

Source: prepared by the authors (2026), from the studies cited.

2.3 Analysis

An exploratory reading followed, to identify the relevant texts, and an analytical and interpretive reading, to extract arguments and findings on relationship practices, satisfaction, trust and customer retention. The information was organized into four thematic categories, corresponding to Sections 3 to 6, and compared according to the thematic analysis technique (Braun & Clarke, 2006), with attention to convergences, divergences and gaps. The nature of each study was preserved in the interpretation: conclusions of theoretical works and reviews were not treated as empirical evidence in their own right, and findings of field studies were taken in their context. There was no data collection with consumers or organizations, and the research, because it uses only published texts, is exempt from ethics committee review.

3 RELATIONSHIP MARKETING AND VALUE CREATION

Relationship marketing goes beyond the commercial transaction: it seeks to build, cultivate and maintain long-term ties between brands and their audiences. Instead of concentrating on the moment of sale, it is dedicated to understanding what the customer needs and expects, creating a basis for the partnership to mature. As Augusto and Almeida Júnior (2015) point out, this closeness and the effort to understand the consumer make relationships stronger and more lasting. The authors recall, drawing on Kotler and Keller, that retaining customers is usually more economical than winning new ones, since loyal customers generate referrals and are easier to win back after a failure. This is an economic argument from secondary sources, and not a result tested in the studies of the corpus.

From a theoretical standpoint, Sheth and Parvatiyar (1995) maintain that relationships in consumer markets also stem from a consumer choice, since consumers may prefer to maintain bonds to reduce the complexity and effort of decision-making. This shifts attention from the company, which "retains," to the relationship, which is maintained only if it makes sense to both parties. Palmatier et al. (2006), in a meta-analysis of the effectiveness of relationship marketing, identify relationship quality, expressed in trust, commitment and satisfaction, as the mediator through which the company's investments reach outcomes.

Creating real ties requires more than good intentions: it depends on clear communication, attentive service and the constant delivery of experiences that make sense to the audience. Relationship marketing is not reduced, therefore, to promotional campaigns or loyalty programs; it relies on everyday attitudes that raise the quality of each contact. This continuous exchange allows the organization to know who is on the other side and to develop solutions aligned with their expectations. The practices described in the corpus include personalized communication, individualized service, the offering of benefits, customer relationship management (CRM) systems and reward programs (Augusto & Almeida Júnior, 2015; Moraes et al., 2024).

The relationship is also associated with value creation. Perceived value does not stem only from the product's characteristics or price, but from the experience along the stages of the relationship: adequate service, availability of information, personalization of communication and fulfillment of expectations. For Morgan and Hunt (1994), successful relationships rest on the combination of trust and commitment, the central mediating

variables of continuous exchange. In this reading, value is not only a concrete advantage offered, but the conviction that the partnership is safe and worth preserving. Sirdeshmukh et al. (2002) reinforce the argument by showing that the trust placed in front-line staff and in the company's policies influences perceived value and loyalty.

4 CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IN THE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE BRAND

Satisfaction is one of the most relevant elements for assessing the quality of the relationship. It stems from the evaluation consumers make after an experience, comparing what they expected with what they perceived. Oliver (1980) formalized this logic in an expectancy-confirmation model: satisfaction results from the confirmation or disconfirmation of expectations and may influence attitude and purchase intention. Satisfaction therefore depends not only on the product or service, but on the distance between what was promised and what was lived.

Several factors take part in this evaluation: perceived quality, service, communication, ease of access to information, the fulfillment of promises and the ability to solve problems. Augusto and Almeida Júnior (2015) add that satisfaction occurs when performance matches or exceeds expectations and list, among its supports, team training, technology and the monitoring of indicators. Satisfaction should not, therefore, be analyzed in isolation, but within the set of interactions between customer and organization.

In the bond with the brand, experiences that match or exceed expectations tend to favor a positive evaluation of the relationship, and experiences below expectations may harm it. Alves et al. (2017) discuss satisfaction as part of a set that includes experience, trust and commitment, and connect this set to loyalty. It is advisable, however, to resist the temptation to take satisfaction as a synonym of customer retention. Augusto and Almeida Júnior (2015) recall that it is a necessary but not sufficient condition for loyalty, and Oliver (1999) observes that loyalty usually involves satisfied customers, but satisfaction, by itself, does not produce it.

Seiders et al. (2005) offer evidence of why the link is fragile. In retail data, the relationship between satisfaction and repurchase proved to be moderated by convenience, competition, involvement and income, and stated intention diverged from observed behavior. Garbarino and Johnson (1999) add that the role of satisfaction varies with the degree of the customer's relationship: for those with a weak bond, it weighs more on future intentions; for those with a strong bond, trust and commitment become the main mediators. Satisfaction is therefore a dimension that takes part in building lasting relationships, and not a guarantee of them.

5 TRUST IN THE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE BRAND

Trust is a decisive factor for a good relationship. It is tied to the brand's credibility and its ability to keep its promises by offering quality products and services. When customers trust, they feel safer and tend to maintain the relationship. According to Morgan and Hunt (1994), trust and commitment are fundamental to lasting relationships, and trust precedes commitment and reduces perceived uncertainty in the exchange. To build it, the company needs to communicate clearly, serve well and respect expectations; when it breaks promises, it tends to lose its customers' trust.

The corpus illustrates this dynamic in different ways. Augusto and Almeida Júnior (2015) treat trust as the foundation of lasting relationships, resulting from ethical conduct, service quality and qualified teams. Eckert et al. (2019), in a survey of 410 online consumers, show that security, privacy and information quality raise trust in a shopping website, and that trust, in turn, raises repurchase intention. The finding is relevant because it indicates that, in environments with less personal contact, trust is built by attributes of the channel itself, and not only by human service. Alves et al. (2017) include trust, alongside experience, satisfaction and commitment, among the elements that favor loyalty to private-label brands.

Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) add a valuable distinction: trust and affect toward the brand lead to purchase loyalty and attitudinal loyalty, with different effects on market share and relative price. Trust, therefore, is not merely a favorable state, but a resource that can translate into specific outcomes. Like satisfaction, however, it is built with consistency: a positive experience contributes to a favorable perception when the

organization shows coherence and fulfills what it promised, and recurring episodes of dissatisfaction weaken the relationship.

6 CUSTOMER RETENTION, LOYALTY, REPURCHASE AND REPURCHASE INTENTION

Customer retention is a central aspect of relationship marketing, since it refers to the creation and maintenance of lasting relationships between companies and consumers, through an understanding of needs, positive experiences and bonds based on satisfaction and trust (Augusto & Almeida Júnior, 2015). Although close, the concepts of customer retention, loyalty, repurchase and repurchase intention are not synonyms, and the literature of the corpus offers elements to separate them (Table 2).

Table 2 — Four close concepts and what each one does not prove

Concept	What it designates	What, in isolation, it does not prove	Basis
Customer retention	Process of winning and keeping customers through relationship strategies; an action of the company.	That the customer has a preference or commitment toward the brand.	Augusto and Almeida Júnior (2015)
Loyalty	Combination of a favorable attitude toward the brand (preference, commitment) and purchase behavior.	That repeating purchases is enough; repetition may have practical motives.	Dick and Basu (1994); Oliver (1999); Alves et al. (2017)
Repurchase	A new purchase actually made.	That there is loyalty: the customer may return out of convenience, price or lack of alternatives.	Alves et al. (2017); Seiders et al. (2005)
Repurchase intention	Willingness or probability of buying again in the future.	That the purchase will occur; intention is not behavior.	Eckert et al. (2019); Seiders et al. (2005)

Source: prepared by the authors (2026), based on the studies indicated in the last column.

Dick and Basu (1994) provide the most cited conceptual criterion: genuine loyalty combines a favorable relative attitude and a repurchase pattern, and repurchase without a favorable attitude is merely apparent. Alves et al. (2017), drawing on Newman and Werbel (1973), stress that the repetition of purchases, considered in isolation, does not prove loyalty, since the consumer may buy again for different reasons, without preference or commitment. In discussing loyalty to private-label brands in supermarkets, they highlight preference and commitment as relevant aspects of the bond.

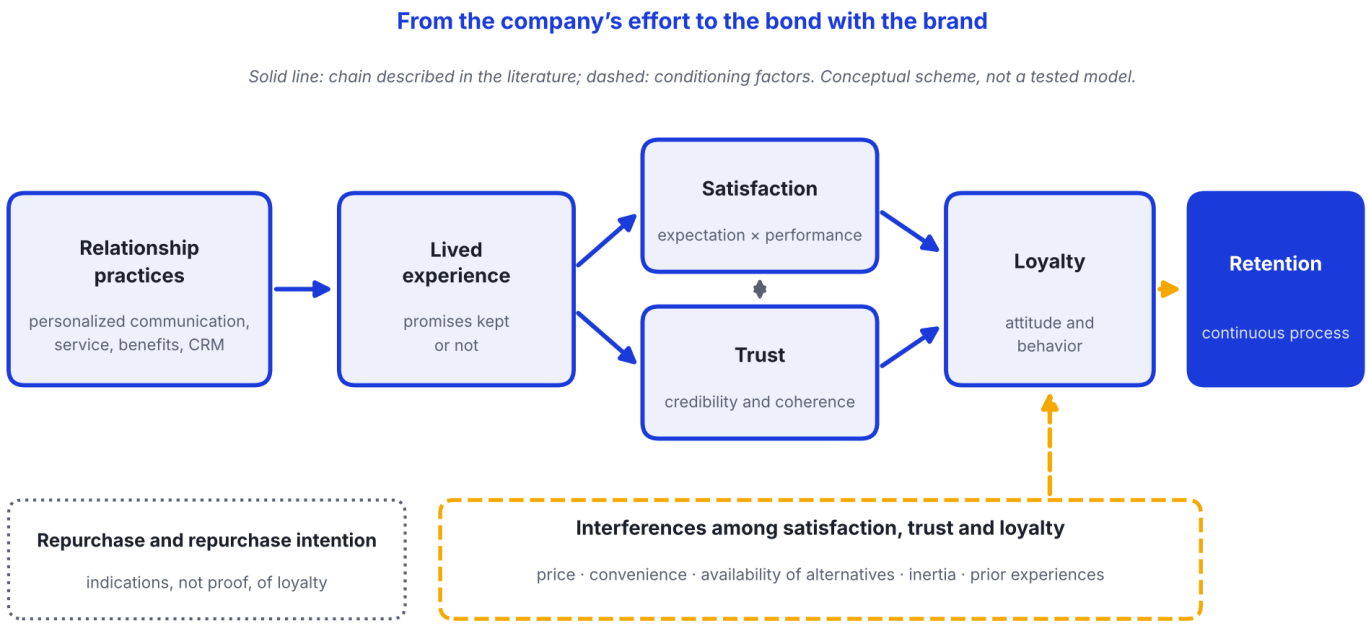
Repurchase intention, in turn, is the possibility of future behavior, related, in the study by Eckert et al. (2019), to trust. Although it may be associated with loyalty, it does not mean that the purchase will actually be made, and the evidence from Seiders et al. (2005) on the distance between intention and behavior reinforces this caution. Kumar and Shah (2004) also recall that loyalty interests the company only insofar as it is also profitable, which invites linking customer retention to the assessment of return, and not only to purchase frequency.

Moraes et al. (2024) highlight practices, such as personalized communication, individualized service, CRM and reward programs, that may contribute to customer retention, because they create emotional connections and make it less likely that the customer will switch to competitors. Customer retention relates to the actions to win and keep customers; loyalty, to the attitudes and behaviors of preference for a brand; repurchase, to a purchase made; and intention, to the possibility of future purchases. This distinction makes it possible to assess more clearly whether relationship practices produce a bond or merely movement.

7 INTEGRATIVE SYNTHESIS

The articulation of the four axes allows us to propose the scheme in Figure 1. Relationship practices are the company's effort to know the customer, understand their expectations and develop interactions that sustain bonds (Augusto & Almeida Júnior, 2015). This effort becomes value only when it materializes in lived experience, and it is in this experience that satisfaction and trust are formed, relating to each other: a positive and coherent experience favors trust, and trust, in turn, changes how the customer reads subsequent experiences. Both feed loyalty, which combines attitude and behavior, and customer retention is the continuous process by which the company sustains this loyalty.

Figure 1 — Conceptual scheme of the bond among relationship practices, satisfaction, trust and customer retention



Source: prepared by the authors (2026), based on the synthesis of the literature. Conceptual scheme, not empirically tested.

The scheme records, however, where the chain breaks down. Consumer permanence may be influenced by price, convenience, availability of alternatives and prior experiences, as shown by Seiders et al. (2005) and Garbarino and Johnson (1999), and the repetition of purchases may reflect practical motives, without preference for the brand (Alves et al., 2017; Dick & Basu, 1994). Customer retention should be understood, therefore, as a continuous process, which requires attention to consumers' needs, quality in interactions and coherence between the expectations created and the experiences actually offered.

8 DISCUSSION

8.1 Convergences

The literature converges on three points. The first is that relationship marketing contributes to lasting bonds when it is articulated with satisfaction and trust: Augusto and Almeida Júnior (2015) emphasize understanding needs, and Moraes et al. (2024) stress personalization, close service and benefits. The second is that the quality of interactions and the consistency of organizational actions sustain the relationship, a perspective shared by Morgan and Hunt (1994) and by Palmatier et al. (2006). The third is that satisfaction, although relevant, is not equivalent to customer retention, a point on which Oliver (1999), Augusto and Almeida Júnior (2015) and Seiders et al. (2005) coincide by different paths.

8.2 Tensions and gaps

There are tensions that the synthesis does not eliminate. The first is that the analytical corpus mixes reviews and field studies, and the weight of the conclusions is not the same: the economic and operational claims of Augusto and Almeida Júnior (2015) rest on secondary sources. The second is one of context: Alves et al. (2017) study private-label brands in supermarkets, and Eckert et al. (2019), online shopping, so that transferring the findings to other sectors calls for caution. The third is that most studies measure perceptions and intentions, and not actual behavior, which weakens any inference about the conversion of trust into repeat purchase.

Another tension concerns technology. CRM systems and personalization, valued by Augusto and Almeida Júnior (2015) and by Moraes et al. (2024), presuppose legitimate use of data; at the same time, Eckert et al. (2019) show that privacy and security are antecedents of trust. Personalization that ignores privacy may thus erode the very resource it intends to build. The literature examined does not resolve the matter, which presents itself as a research agenda.

8.3 Managerial implications

- **Measure the bond, not just the purchase.** Indicators of attitude, trust and satisfaction should accompany purchase frequency, which alone does not prove loyalty.
- **Keep what is promised.** Coherence between what the brand communicates and what it delivers sustains both satisfaction and trust.
- **Personalize with respect for privacy.** Security and transparency in the use of data are part of building trust, especially in the digital environment.
- **Treat problem solving as a relationship opportunity.** Handling failures and monitoring satisfaction reinforce the perception of consistency.
- **Differentiate customer segments.** If the weight of satisfaction and trust varies with the degree of the relationship (Garbarino & Johnson, 1999), actions should consider the profile of each group.

8.4 Limitations and research agenda

The limitations stem from the bibliographic nature of the study and from the intentional selection: the analytical corpus is small, the search was restricted to a single academic tool, no count of records per stage is reported and part of the readings was based on journal abstracts, which limits reproducibility and precludes generalizations. As future research, we suggest (i) empirical studies with consumers from different sectors, which test the scheme proposed here and the moderating role of price, convenience and alternatives; (ii) longitudinal designs, which follow the passage from repurchase intention to actual repurchase; (iii) research on the relationship among personalization, privacy and trust; and (iv) systematic reviews, with a protocol and a count of records, which expand the analytical layer.

9 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study analyzed, through an integrative review, how the scientific literature characterizes the relationships among relationship marketing, satisfaction, trust and customer retention in the bond with the brand. The studies examined indicate that these elements are related and contribute, in different ways, to the construction and maintenance of bonds between companies and consumers.

In response to the research question, the literature indicates that practices such as personalized communication, quality of service and attention to customers' needs favor positive experiences and contribute to satisfaction and trust, which, in turn, may strengthen the relationship and favor loyalty. The same literature cautions, however, that satisfaction and trust do not, in isolation, guarantee customer retention, since purchase decisions also respond to price, convenience and the availability of alternatives. Another relevant point is the need to distinguish customer retention, loyalty, repurchase and repurchase intention: the repetition of purchases does not prove that the customer has developed a preference or commitment to the brand, and organizations need to consider the quality of the relationship, and not just purchase frequency.

From a managerial standpoint, the review reinforces the importance of continuous relationship strategies: understanding expectations, serving adequately, solving problems and keeping promises. Customer retention is a process that requires constant follow-up and coherence between what the brand communicates and what it actually delivers. It is acknowledged that the conclusions are conditioned by the studies consulted and cannot be generalized to all market segments. We conclude that relationship marketing is a relevant approach for understanding the construction of bonds between companies and consumers, but that customer retention depends on a set of factors and must be worked on continuously.

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Data availability: no primary data were generated; the sources analyzed are listed in the References.

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