Online Relationship Marketing on Engagement and Customer Loyalty toward Mobile Phone Network Service Providers in Thailand

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Abstract

The objectives of this research are to study the influence of online relationship marketing on customer engagement, and to study the influence of customer engagement on customer loyalty toward mobile phone network service providers in Thailand. The sample group consists of 400 customers who use mobile phone network services, both prepaid and the monthly system, in Thailand. The researcher used questionnaires as the research instrument, and the data analysis was conducted via a structural equation model. The result found that the online relationship marketing factor consists of four areas: trust, commitment, empathy, and bonding, all of which have a direct and positive impact on customer engagement. In addition, these factors also have indirect and positive effects on customer loyalty through customer engagement. Furthermore, customer engagement has direct, positive effects on customer loyalty.

Keywords: 1) Online Relationship Marketing 2) Customer Engagement 3) Customer Loyalty 4) Mobile Phone Network Service Providers

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Introduction

In current market conditions, the telecommunication industry is continually growing. In addition, the rapid increase in communication technology advances and the lower cost from mobile phone service providers have resulted in the widespread use of mobile phones by users. This makes communication by mobile phone to become an important factor in the current life of the people in Thailand (Bangkok Business, 2021, p.1). In addition, the population using mobile phones, the internet, and information and communication technology devices are increasing. When considering the patterns of mobile phone use, it was found that the population uses mobile phones in the capacity of smartphones the most. Mobile phone users are people aged six years and over who live in and outside the municipality. Furthermore, when considering the trend of using the internet during the period 2016-2020, it was found that in those five years, Thailand's internet users jumped from 47.5% (or 29.8 million people), to 77.8 percent (or 49.7 million people). Meanwhile, the proportion of computer users tended to decrease (National Statistical Office, 2021, pp.3-4). From the statistics above, it shows the importance of using mobile phones which are essential to the lives of the people of Thailand; and their use expands to a wider group of users which include children. Moreover, for most of the population's access to the internet, there is a tendency to use it via mobile phone (in a smartphone capacity) than computers or other technological devices.

In other words, from such statistics and scenarios, the use of mobile phones as smartphones has become a communication device in the digital society that most people cannot live without. In Thailand, there are three major mobile phone network service providers, namely AIS, DTAC and True, which have been service providers in Thailand for more than 10 years (Smart Small and Medium Enterprises, 2020, p.1). In addition, since the start of 5G service in early 2020, all mobile phone network service providers have developed bold marketing strategies to compete more aggressively for market share, including developing a relationship marketing strategy to maintain their existing customer bases (Brand Inside, 2021, p.1). Therefore, when entering a fully digital society, the development of marketing strategies for entrepreneurs to respond to a rapidly changing era has resulted in the creation of traditional relationship marketing strategies which focus on online relationship marketing. This strategy continues to focus on building, maintaining and developing good, long-term relationships just by interacting through more electronic systems (Steinhoff, et al., 2019, p.369). The success of relationship marketing is due to the use of various marketing strategies and methods through online relationship marketing to retain existing customers, resulting in engagement and customer loyalty (Hinson, et al., 2019, p.204). However, for the most part, past research has only studied the concepts of traditional relationship marketing strategies, but lacks an application to the online relationship marketing concept, which continues to be found in only a small number of studies.

Based on the aforementioned importance, this is a study of online relational marketing on engagement and customer loyalty toward mobile phone network service providers in Thailand. Therefore, it is a research work that includes theoretical and managerial contributions. The results of this study reveal the phenomena among factors in online relationship marketing that affect engagement and customer loyalty. It proposes to offer a guideline for creating online relationship marketing strategy in the digital society for mobile phone network service providers, which is sustainable in Thailand.

Objective

1. To study the influence of online relationship marketing on customer engagement toward mobile phone network service providers in Thailand.

2. To study the influence of engagement on customer loyalty toward mobile phone network service providers in Thailand.

Literature Review
Online Relationship Marketing

The concept of relationship marketing has gained widespread interest in marketing scholars and entrepreneurs since the early 1980s. The concept of relational marketing is the antithesis of traditional marketing theory which originates from a transactional theory paradigm; it has led to relationship marketing in the digital age which faces technology-driven trends. In addition, in the transition to a service-dominant economy, intensified compe-

tition has led to global growth in emerging markets, an aging society, and the saturation of traditional advertising. Therefore, online relationship marketing in the digital era is critical to entrepreneurial strategy and firm performance (Palmatier and Steinhoff, 2019, p.4). Meanwhile, past research has shown that relationship marketing that includes long-standing relationships with existing customers is more profitable than transactions with new customers. This is consistent with the fact that the cost of serving a single loyal customer is lower than the cost of attracting and serving one new customer (Thaichon, Brown and Weaven, 2020, p.673). From the results of such studies, online relationship marketing is gaining more attention, especially in the hospitality industry. However, the trend of entrepreneurs incorporating technology into their relationship marketing with their customers continues to increase. This is especially true in the era of social media where information is exchanged through online community channels in various platforms or applications such as Website, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, YouTube, and TikTok. These media platforms have a large number of users and are widely popular today, driving entrepreneurs to use these channels to play a role in online relationship marketing (Chaimuang, Saefung and Kongkerd, 2020, p.154).

Moreover, past research into related areas of relationship marketing with customer engagement from many scholars has found that online relationship marketing has a positive influence on customer engagement through mobile banking applications in Thailand (Fang, et al., 2020, p.257). Meanwhile, the research of

Van Tonder and Petzer (2018, p.948) found that relationship marketing structures have a positive impact on customer engagement in terms of interaction, interest, assimilation, and love for service providers. Additionally, research by Itani, Kassarb and Loureiro (2019, p.84) also found that relationship marketing quality had a positive influence on customer engagement with service providers. A study by Bojei and Abu (2014, pp.176-177), in The Journal of Relationship Marketing, examined the six dimensions of relationship marketing: trust, commitment, communication, conflict-handling, empathy, and bonding contract all of which are important factors that helped to build customer engagement with the mobile phone service industry in Malaysia. However, such studies are only research propositions as there is a lack of empirical studies on the relationships of the variables.

Therefore, this study defines online relationship marketing as a relationship market-building strategy, of an entrepreneurial nature, that is delivered to customers through social media channels in a digital platform or using various digital applications. It focuses on driving marketing factors in building trust, commitment, communication, conflict-handling, empathy, and bonding for engagement and customer loyalty toward mobile phone network service providers in Thailand. Thus, this study defines the hypotheses as follows:

H1: Trust has a positive effect on customer engagement toward mobile phone network service providers in Thailand.

H2: Commitment has a positive effect on customer engagement toward mobile phone network service providers in Thailand.

H3: Communication has a positive effect on customer engagement toward mobile phone network service providers in Thailand.

H4: Conflict-handling has a positive effect on customer engagement toward mobile phone network service providers in Thailand.

H5: Empathy has a positive effect on customer engagement toward mobile phone network service providers in Thailand.

H6: Bonding has a positive effect on customer engagement toward mobile phone network service providers in Thailand.

Engagement and Customer Loyalty

Customer engagement is a strategy that results in the customer becoming attached to the brand or organization, which in turn creates a deep bond through emotional attachment that makes the brand or organization a part of people's lives in their consuming habits (Tiangtham, 2010, p.72). In the customer engagement framework proposed by Bowden (2009, p.66), customer engagement is a psychological process in which the customer manifests ways that lead to repeat buying behavior and loyalty. In addition, a study by Sawhney, Verona and Prandelli (2005, p.4) examined businesses that recognized the power of the internet through a platform to create value co-creation with their customers. The internet has shown a remarkable ability to create deep customer engagement. This creates interactions in the form of enhanced reach, persistence, speed, and flexibility. It also pointed out that companies can use these capabilities for building relationship marketing

strategies and customer collaboration through a variety of internet technology mechanisms. Consistent with a study by De Vries and Carlson (2014, p.495), it has been found that social media allows customers to communicate with entrepreneurs to build relationships through different platforms and applications on social media. Therefore, activities that are involved in building relationships with customers through the use of social media operators helps in brand strength and customer engagement.

Therefore, this study is defines customer engagement as the expression of customers towards the online relationship marketing strategies by mobile phone network service providers in Thailand; it is accomplished through social media in the form of various platforms or applications. It demonstrates collaborative customer interactions in the nature of increased reach over a continuous and connected period, which is a factor that drives customer loyalty. Thus, this study defines the hypothesis as follows:

H7: Customer engagement has a positive effect on customer loyalty toward mobile phone network service providers in Thailand.

Customer Loyalty

The customer loyalty concept describes the willingness of the customer to express unchanging attitudes concerning the use competitors' products, and which results in repeat purchases. Customer loyalty helps to reduce feelings of uncertainty, information asymmetry, and fear of opportunism. It gives customers peace of mind in making choices to use reliable products (Laroche, et al., 2012, p.1755). Further, in measuring customer loy-

alty from Parasuraman, Zeithamt and Berry's (1994, p.121) concept of measuring customer loyalty to a business in the context of a service business, it comprises four dimensions: 1) word of mouth communication), 2) purchase intention, 3) price sensitivity, and 4) complaining behavior. However, today's social media is an important tool for building relationship marketing activities that lead to customer loyalty. This is consistent with a study by Cheng, Fu and De Vreede (2017, p.32) which explains that social networks can effectively develop and maintain relationships between entrepreneurs and customers. This is social capital that affects the development of relationships with each other and results in customer loyalty to the brand.

Therefore, this study defines customer loyalty as the behavioral expressions of customers toward mobile phone network service providers in Thailand through social media in the form of platforms or applications, and in terms of word of mouth communication, purchase intention, price sensitivity, and complaining behavior.

Conceptual Framework

The research into the conceptual framework illustrates the relationship between online relationship marketing on engagement and customer loyalty. In this study, the researchers integrated a conceptual framework of independent variables of relational marketing, based on the six-dimensional concept of Bojei and Abu (2014, pp.176-177). All variables consist of eight latent variables which are divided into two categories, exogenous and

endogenous. Exogenous variables consist of six variables which are: 1) trust, 2) commitment, 3) communication, 4) conflict-handling, 5) empathy, and 6) bonding. Endogenous variables consist of two variables: customer engagement and customer loyalty. Every latent variable consists of four observable variables, as shown in Picture No. 1 below.
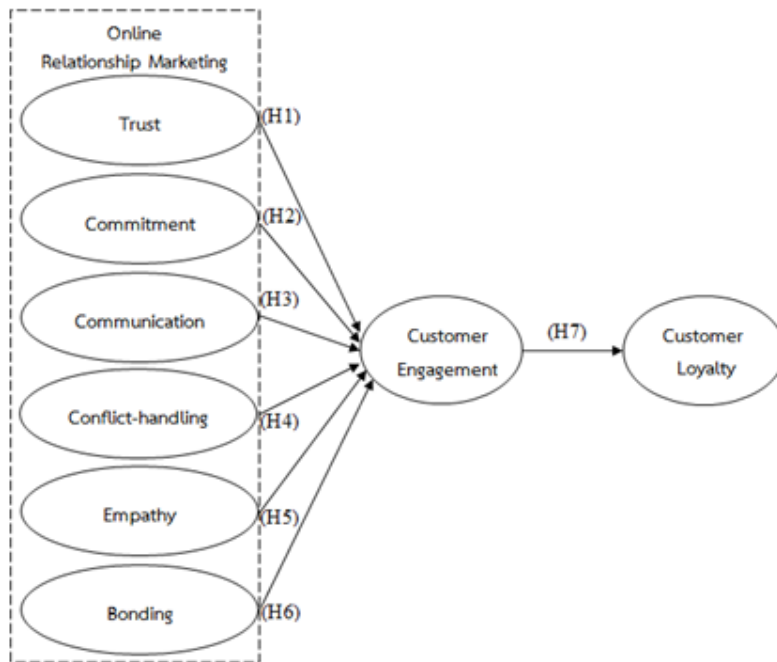
Picture No. 1 Research Structure of the Conceptual Framework

Methods

Population and sample: The population used in the research was customers who use both prepaid and postpaid mobile phone networks in Thailand. In this study, the population is unknown due to the large number of users; thus, the sample size was a calculated non-probability sampling. According to the calculation formula of Cochran (1977, pp.75-76), at a 95 percent confidence level, and no more than a five percent error, this was calculated to a minimum sample size of 385 samples. The random sampling method uses a purposive sampling technique for customers who use both prepaid mobile phone networks and monthly systems in Thailand, mainly

through survey channels on social media such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Line. The questionnaire was distributed across 1,000 social media users with a response rate of 441. The researchers then screened 41 incomplete questionnaires from the study. Therefore, the remaining 400 questionnaires were used for data analysis in this research.

The researcher used questionnaires as the research instrument. The questionnaire was created from a review of past literature and related research which was divided into four sections: 1) general information of respondents, 2) online relationship marketing strategies, 3) customer engagement and loyalty, and 4) an open-ended questionnaire for

respondents to express other opinions.

Assessment of research tools: The researchers used a questionnaire created by three experts to determine the index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC). The results of the investigation found that the value ranges from 0.80 to 1.00, passing an acceptable benchmark of greater than 0.50 (Ritjaroon, 2014, p.4). Subsequently, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was analyzed, which is a measure of reliability in questionnaires with Likert-scale questions (Nunnally, 1978, pp.245-246). After that, the preliminary data was checked by testing the distribution of the data with a normality test by determining the kurtosis and skewness values. An examination of highly-correlated independent variables (multicolinearity) was done by analyzing the tolerance values close to one. Further, analysis from the variance inflation factor (VIF), with the value not exceeding 10, was done by testing the distribution of the data. It was found that all values passed the specified criteria. The data was analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), utilizing the ADANCO program package (Henseler, Hubona and Ray, 2016, p.13). However, the criteria to consider the measurement model and structural equation model measurement criteria are shown in Tables No. 1 and 2 as follows:

Table No. 1 Measurement Model

Measurement Model	Criteria	Reference
Factor Loading	> 0.50	Hair, Ringle and Sarstedt (2011, p.145)
AVE (Average Variance Extracted)	> 0.50	Hair, et al. (2011, p.146)
ρ_A Dikstra-Henseler's rho	> 0.70	Nunnally and Bernstein (1994, p.83)
ρ_C The Jöreskog's rho	> 0.70	Henseler, Ringle and Sinkovics (2009, p.277)
α Cronbach's alpha	> 0.70	Nunnally (1978, pp.245-246)
Discriminant validity: Fornell-Larcker criterion	$> (AVE)^2$	Fornell and Larcker (1981, pp.45-46)
Discriminant validity: Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio of correlation (HTMT)	< 1	Teo, Srivastava and Jiang (2008, p.113)

Table No. 2 Structural Equation Model Measurement Criteria

Measurement Model	Criteria	Reference
Coefficient of Determination R^2	0.25 = Small-Size 0.50 = Medium-Size 0.75 = Large-Size	Hair, et al. (2011, p.145)
Effect Size, f^2	0.02 = Small-Size 0.15 = Medium-Size 0.35 = Large-Size	Cohen (2013, pp.77-83)
Path Coefficient	p-value	Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson and Tatham (2009, p.47)

Results

The general information of respondents using mobile phone network services in Thailand is as follows. Most respondents were male, aged between 20 and 30 years old, with single status, holding a bachelor's degree, and in an occupation as a private company employee. The average monthly income was 20,001-30,000 baht, who used the mobile phone network service of the AIS postpaid network, and are domiciled in the central region.

The results of the online relational marketing factor analysis revealed that respondents had a high level of opinions on all six dimensions of online relationship marketing ($\bar{x}$ = 3.83, S.D. = 0.610). When each aspect was considered, it was found that respondents had a high level of opinion in all aspects, with the most opinions about the bonding aspect ($\bar{x}$ = 3.93, SD = 0.78), followed by communication ($\bar{x}$ = 3.92, SD = 0.513), conflict-handling ($\bar{x}$ = 3.87, SD = 0.510), trust ($\bar{x}$ = 3.84, SD = 0.653), empa-thy ($\bar{x}$ = 3.83, SD = 0.653), and commitment ($\bar{x}$ = 3.75, SD = 0.547), respectively. In the analysis of engagement and customer loyalty, it was found that respondents had a high level of opinion on both factors ($\bar{x}$ = 3.67, S.D. = 0.726), and ($\bar{x}$ = 3.583, SD = 0.749) respectively.

In the analysis of the influence of online relational marketing on engagement and customer loyalty, this study was a reflective model study using the ADANCO program package. In the standard measurement model, considering the weight (loading), it was found to be between 0.702 to 0.864, in which every value was greater than 0.50. As to convergent validity, based on the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), it ranged from 0.575 to 0.867, with all values greater than 0.50. As to the values, ρ_A (Dijkstra-Henseler's rho), ρ_C (Jöreskog's rho), and α (Cronbach's alpha), all three values ranged from 0.754 to 0.908, which was greater than 0.70. For details, see Table No. 3, below.

Table No. 3 Statistical Values of the Measurement Model

Latent variables /observable variables	Loading	AVE	ρ_A	ρ_C	α
Trust	-	0.867	0.867	0.908	0.865
Tru1	0.843				
Tru2	0.822				
Tru3	0.864				
Tru4	0.849				
Commitment	-	0.602	0.790	0.857	0.779
Cmit1	0.817				
Cmit2	0.821				
Cmit3	0.742				
Cmit4	0.718				

Latent variables /observable variables	Loading	AVE	ρ_A	ρ_C	α
Communication	-	0.575	0.761	0.843	0.754
Cmu1	0.767				
Cmu2	0.721				
Cmu3	0.800				
Cmu4	0.743				
Conflict-handling	-	0.582	0.762	0.847	0.761
Cflic1	0.752				
Cflic2	0.783				
Cflic3	0.795				
Cflic4	0.721				
Empathy	-	0.588	0.770	0.850	0.765
Emp1	0.734				
Emp2	0.775				
Emp3	0.824				
Emp4	0.733				
Bonding	-	0.628	0.813	0.870	0.802
Bon1	0.836				
Bon2	0.702				
Bon3	0.827				
Bon4	0.800				
Customer Engagement	-	0.696	0.854	0.901	0.854
Eng1	0.830				
Eng2	0.859				
Eng3	0.802				
Eng4	0.847				
Customer Loyalty	-	0.595	0.801	0.854	0.781
Loy1	0.757				
Loy2	0.816				
Loy3	0.768				
Loy4	0.743				

Table No. 4 Discriminant Validity: Fornell-Larcker Criterion

Construct	Tru	Cmit	Cmu	Cflic	Emp	Bon	Eng	Loy
Tru	0.713							
Cmit	0.444	0.602						
Cmu	0.294	0.244	0.575					
Cflic	0.314	0.265	0.215	0.582				
Emp	0.248	0.310	0.287	0.217	0.588			
Bon	0.382	0.328	0.346	0.286	0.298	0.628		
Eng	0.446	0.378	0.256	0.248	0.262	0.343	0.696	
Loy	0.195	0.171	0.109	0.118	0.137	0.175	0.328	0.595

Table No. 5 Discriminant Validity: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of Correlation (HTMT)

Construct	Tru	Cmit	Cmu	Cflic	Emp	Bon	Eng	Loy
Tru								
Cmit	0.799							
Cmu	0.663	0.633						
Cflic	0.689	0.668	0.603					
Emp	0.610	0.713	0.697	0.608				
Bon	0.732	0.716	0.748	0.680	0.692			
Eng	0.775	0.748	0.623	0.613	0.632	0.703		
Loy	0.485	0.505	0.398	0.416	0.462	0.498	0.665	

Table No. 4 demonstrates the discriminant validity analysis using the Fornell-Larcker criteria. This shows a total of eight latent variables, based on the diagonal AVE matrix structure, and the latent variable relationship for each latent variable, where the value $(AVE)^2$ should be greater than the correlation between the latent variables. The results of this study ranged from 0.575 to 0.713, all of which were greater than the correlation between the latent variables. In addition, the discriminant validity analysis is shown in Table No. 5, using the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of Correlation (HTMT) criterion. The study also considered the measurement of numerical straightness, which is from 0.398 to 0.799. Out of all considerations, the value is less than 1. From all these results, the measurement model consideration was identified as being accurate and reliable, leading to a fully interpretable structural model.
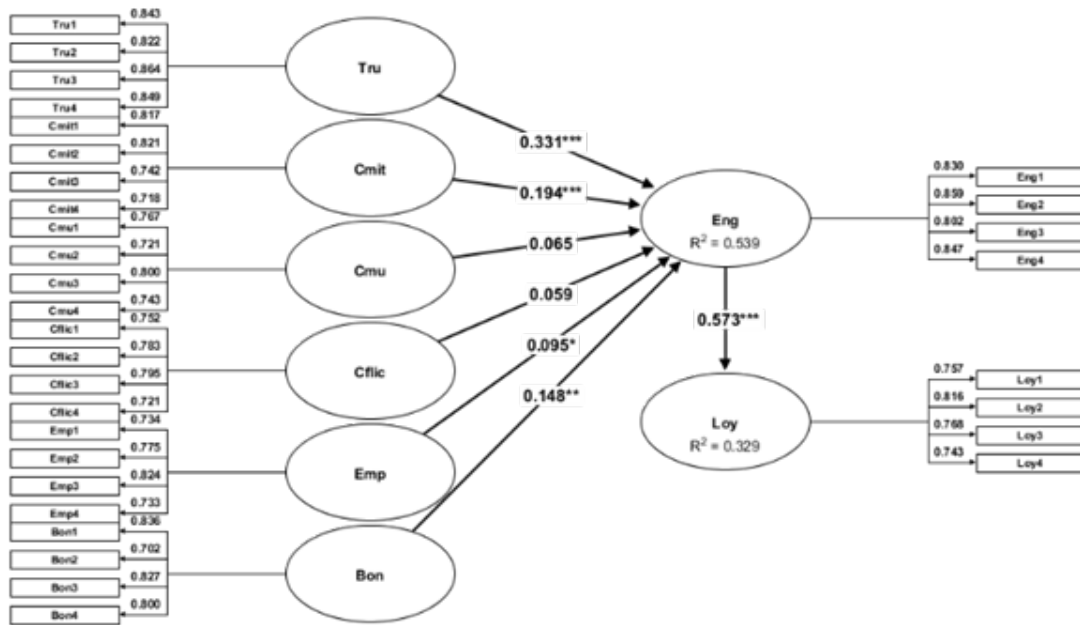
Picture No. 2 The Results of the Structural Equation Model Test

To consider the structural equation model from the path coefficient is to observe the direct, indirect and total effects. Picture No. 2 shows the R^2 values of the eight latent variables which have values between 0.305 to 0.539, which is a low-medium value. In addition, Table No. 6 shows the hypothesis test results. From the seven hypothesis tests, the hypothesis testing results revealed that five hypotheses were accepted and two were rejected as shown in Table No. 6 below.

Table No. 6 Hypothesis Test Results

Hypothesis	Path	S.E.	t-value	p-value	Results
H1: Tru → Eng	0.331	0.044	7.347	0.000***	Accepted
H2: Cmit → Eng	0.194	0.047	4.123	0.000***	Accepted
H3: Cmu → Eng	0.065	0.049	1.326	0.185	Rejected
H4: Cflic → Eng	0.059	0.047	1.235	0.217	Rejected
H5: Emp → Eng	0.095	0.047	1.987	0.047*	Accepted
H6: Bon → Eng	0.148	0.050	2.959	0.003**	Accepted
H7: Eng → Loy	0.573	0.032	17.654	0.000***	Accepted

Note: ***$p < 0.001$, **$p < 0.01$, *$p < 0.05$, (N=400)

Table No. 7 The Direct Effect, Indirect and Total Effect

Effect	Beta (Direct Effects)	Indirect Effects	Total Effects	Cohen's f2
Eng → Loy	0.573	-	0.573	0.489

Effect	Beta (Direct Effects)	Indirect Effects	Total Effects	Cohen's f2
Tru → Eng	0.331	-	0.331	0.102
Tru → Loy	-	0.189	0.189	-
Cmit → Eng	0.194	-	0.194	0.038
Cmit → Loy	-	0.111	0.111	-
Emp → Eng	0.095	-	0.095	0.011
Emp → Loy	-	0.054	0.054	-
Bon → Eng	0.148	-	0.148	0.022
Bon → Loy	-	0.085	0.085	-

Table No. 7 shows the direct, indirect and total effects from the sum of the factors. Results showed that customer loyalty was positively and indirectly impacted by trust which was 0.189, commitment was 0.111, empathy was 0.054, and commitment was 0.085. through customer engagement. Moreover, the total influence was comprised of values between 0.054 to 0.573.

Conclusion and Discussion

The summary of the study of online relationship marketing on engagement and customer loyalty toward mobile phone network service providers in Thailand is as follows. According to the study, there are four factors of online relationship marketing: trust, commitment, empathy, and bonding, all of which have a positive and direct influence on customer engagement. The four online relational marketing factors are also factors that indirectly and positively affect customer loyalty through a customer engagement variable, which is a mediating variable. However, two factors of online relationship marketing, namely communication and conflict-handling, are factors that do not affect customer engagement. In addition, the customer engagement factor has a direct and positive influence on customer loyalty.

The results of this study can be discussed as follows: Trust is the most influential factor that directly and positively affects customer engagement. In other words, the more trust a company builds through its online relationship model, the higher the customer engagement. This is consistent with Hapsari, Hussein and Handrito (2020, p.49) whose research found that trust directly impacts customer engagement in the telecom industry. In addition, trust has a positive and indirect effect on customer loyalty. This is in line with Petzer and Tonder (2019, p.601) who found that trust positively and indirectly affects customer loyalty through customer engagement variables. Meanwhile, commitment is a secondary influencing factor that directly and positively affects customer engagement. This is consistent with Rather and Sharma (2017, p.41), who found that commitment strategy, is one of the key concepts of relationship marketing, and is a correlating factor in long-term customer

engagement. In other words, if a company is committed to managing an online relationship strategy based on customer benefits, it will result in long-term customer engagement with the company. In addition, commitment has a positive and indirect effect on customer loyalty. This is consistent with Petzer and Tonder (2019, p.601) who found that commitment has a positive and indirect effect on customer loyalty through customer engagement.

The bonding aspect is also a factor that has a direct and positive impact on customer engagement. This is consistent with Brodie, et al. (2013, p.105) who found that bonding factors positively correlated with customer engagement in social media communities. In the same way, it can be said that when the customer and the company have a mutual bonding through the online activity model, the customer will feel part of the company, and there will be a long-term bond with the customer. The bonding also has a positive and indirect effect on customer loyalty. This is consistent with Sin, et al. (2002, p.669) who found that bonding, as part of relationship marketing, has a positive and indirect impact on customer return through customer engagement.

Moreover, empathy is yet another factor that affects customer engagement; but it is the least impactful factor. This is consistent with Pansari and Kumar (2017, p.294) who found that empathy factor has a positive relationship with customers' brand engagements. That is to say, if a company has the empathy of its customers through its online relationship marketing system, it will result in more customer engagement with the company. In addition,

empathy has a positive and indirect effect on customer loyalty. This is consistent with Sin, et al. (2002, p.669) who found that empathy is a measure of relationship marketing that has a positive and indirect effect on customer repurchasing through customer engagement.

However, online relationship marketing in communication does not affect customer engagement. This is a very strange phenomenon; it is considered a new and theoretical contribution due to this result. For this reason, it can be said that communication with customers directly through employees or through certain online channels may not affect customer engagement. Examples of this communication are a follow-up call for a customer's outstanding debt, notification of service charges before the due date, or informing of other privileges more than necessary. In these communications, it was found that customers do not need them through channels such as electronic mail (email). Such cases may affect the customer's lack of privacy and may cause the customer to change their mind and use the services of other competitors. This is consistent with Chomchark (2018, p.89), who found that the communication factor was not statistically significant in the engagement of customers using the mobile network. This is also consistent with Phetkong and Hamthanont (2016, p.1) who found that overall marketing communications perceptions of customers did not affect their intentions to use their mobile network in in Southern Thailand.

In addition, online relationship marketing in conflict-handling is another variable that does not affect customer engagement and

loyalty. The results of this study are consistent with Kassim, et al. (2018, p.11), who found that avoiding conflict-handling had a negative effect on satisfaction and customer engagement. Therefore, it can be said that if a business avoids or neglects to deal with conflict-handling related to complaints against customer service through online channels, this can result in customer dissatisfaction and will not positively affect the customer's engagement with the brand.

Customer engagement has a direct and positive impact on customer loyalty. This is consistent with research by Kritzinger and Petzer (2020, p.642). The results show that customer engagement directly impacts customer loyalty for those using mobile applications in South Africa. This is also consistent with the research by Hapsari, et al. (2020, p.49), which found that customer engagement promotions are the main, positive, direct-impact variables, as well as a mediating variable of customer loyalty in the telecom industry of Indonesia. In conclusion, the customer engagement factor is the main factor that directly and positively affects customer loyalty. It is also a mediating variable of the relationship between online relationship marketing and customer loyalty toward mobile phone network service providers in Thailand.

Research Suggestions

1. The recommendations for mobile phone network service providers in Thailand, as a guideline for creating sustainable long-term marketing strategies, are as follows. It focuses on the development of online relationship marketing strategies in four dimensions: 1) Trust with standardized services through mobile operators' application systems, by building a strong business image, and by creating good credibility through the website and other online platforms. 2) In terms of commitment, by offering services that meet customers' needs that deliver the most beneficial services to them through electronic mail channels, and providing the best service for customers through social media in various channels. 3) Empathy by providing complete services at every step through online chat channels. Also, providing understanding of customer problems by introducing comments and reviews on social media in all customer channels to improve service efficiency. 4) Bonding by providing information service or various benefits customers through the application, other websites, or online platforms that can easily reach customers. Developing an online relationship marketing strategy based on these dimensions is a key factor in driving engagement and customer loyalty toward mobile phone network service providers in Thailand.

2. This study also includes recommendations to researchers and other academics as a guideline for the conceptualization of online relationship marketing strategies, leading to applying empirical testing in other industrial contexts, both domestically and internationally. This study also supports the conceptual framework of online relationship marketing that has theoretical contributions that may lead to more widespread dissemination of research.

3. The study proposes recommendations to instructors who are involved in business administration, marketing, business management, or other related branches. These may be used for applying the results from this research study as case studies for teaching and learning in various related subjects such as product brand management and service marketing strategic management. Therefore, these recommendations are to help students understand the course content more clearly.

dimensions of Bojei and Abu (2014, pp.176-177) as a causal variable in the contextual study of mobile phone network service providers in Thailand only. Therefore, future research studies may explore relational marketing in these six dimensions for further empirical studies in other industry contexts as a guide in order to build a sustainable long-term marketing strategy for that industry.

Suggestions for Future Research

In this study, the researcher applied the relational marketing concept in the six

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