

THE USEFULNESS OF RELATIONSHIP MARKETING IN THE KUWAIT OIL INDUSTRY

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Abstract

The fundamental aim of the study is to analyze the usefulness of the relationship-marketing strategy in enhancing customer retention and satisfaction in the oil industry of Kuwait. It explores the concept of relationship marketing, its process, examples, and relevant theories and models have been described in detail. The style and impact of relationship marketing have been stated elaborately by analyzing its advantages, disadvantages, and usefulness from a global perspective. The premium membership scheme has been narrated here to describe the approach of the organizers. Additionally, the advantage of the premium membership package and how this system works in Kuwait are also described. At last, the gap in the literature has been mentioned properly which could be helpful for other researchers. The study has provided the findings of the research and it has included both quantitative and qualitative findings. Based on these findings proper analysis has been made to determine the ways the variables of the study are related to each other, and this has aided in arriving at a proper conclusion regarding the ways premium-membership scheme will help in enhancing the organization's ability to retain their customers in the Kuwait oil industry. Relationship marketing is an important segment of the marketing process. It helps organizations in better customer engagement. Suitable recommendations have been suggested after the concluding statement. The limitations of the research process and the future scopes have also been described properly.

Keywords: Relationship Marketing Strategies, Business & Marketing,

Economics & Management, Oil Industries Marketing, Kuwait Oil Industry

1: Introduction

1.1 Preface

The oil industry in Kuwait is one of the largest sectors in the nation and the industry contributes largely to the growth of the overall GDP of this country. There exists a huge competition amongst the companies within this industry as large organizations with highly competitive edges operate in this industry (Almutirat *et al.* 2022). Thus, it has become essential for the organizations to consider focusing on enhancing their competitiveness through the adoption of a proper marketing strategy that could differentiate them and their products to the customers. The fundamental purpose of the present research is to provide a proper analysis of the ways the oil companies in Kuwait can enhance their revenue and competitiveness while enhancing their customers' loyalty with relationship marketing strategy. In this context, the benefits of premium-membership schemes have also been taken into consideration while analyzing the usefulness of relationship marketing in the industry. The study has included both quantitative and qualitative research for determining the perceived usefulness of this strategy if used within the oil industry of Kuwait.

1.2 Problem Statement

The fundamental problem that has been considered in this study is associated with the possible ways of recovery of the oil industry of Kuwait through the adoption of relationship-marketing strategy using premium-membership scheme. The major problem is that the organizations in this industry are finding it increasingly difficult to retain their loyal customers and attract new customers due to the changes in market landscape after Covid-19 (Ben Hassen, 2022). Thus, it is crucial to make sure that the organizations are able to understand the market and preferences of the customers within the market. This could help them in gaining a proper understanding of the ways the organizations could influence the customers positively so that a positive brand relationship can be established with them.

Further, they will also be guided towards the strategies that they could adopt to alleviate the risks of negative marketing as they could be capable of understanding the customers' minds through a thorough market research before adopting the relationship marketing strategy. Covid-19 has influenced customers' ways of thinking and preferring the products. They have

started to value relationships more than anything else. The businesses could take this change into consideration and incorporate this into their marketing strategy for influencing their intentions of making a purchase positively. Relationship marketing is the best way to influence the choices of the customers positively (Chi, 2021). This is not only confined to providing offers or maintaining direct touch with the customers; however, the marketers in the Kuwait oil-industry could also take into consideration the usefulness of implementing a premium-membership scheme for broadening their loyal customer base.

One of the major problems that most of the organizations in the oil industry of Kuwait confront is retaining their existing customers and ensuring their loyalty in the long-term that often causes them to face difficulties in maintaining their revenue in the market. In 2020, many of the Kuwaiti oil companies reported a decline in oil consumption by their customers resulting in a drop in their revenue. In 2020, oil consumption reduced to 441.089 barrels and the consumption was significantly lower as compared to 2019 (Ceic, 2021). However, in 2021, there was a slight increase in consumption. This has been due to a major increase in oil prices, especially after the outbreak of Covid-19. Further, the oil capacity is exhausted throughout the world causing the organizations to think of innovative strategies to enhance competitiveness (Globaltrademag, 2023). Covid-19 affected supply of materials causing a reduction in oil production. Thus, the companies in the Kuwait oil industry were compelled to increase their oil prices. This had a significant negative impact on the total demand for oil.

Thus, it requires the organizations to adopt an effective marketing strategy to restore and regain loyalty of their customers while attracting new customers in both the B2B and B2C customer segments. In this context, the adoption and implementation of relationship-marketing strategy could provide the organizations with the opportunity to derive potential benefits from their good relationships with the customers in this industry, which could have a significant positive impact on their revenue and profitability in the competitive industry. Relationship marketing generally involves cultivation of meaningful relations with the customers for enhancing loyal customer bases and retaining them in the long-term. This could involve the strategy of using premium-membership scheme for the loyal customers to enhance their loyalty.

1.3 Research Significance, Aim and Objectives

The significance of the research is that it could aid in exploring proper opportunities by the organizations in Kuwait oil industry. This has provided a proper understanding of the importance of implementing relationship-marketing strategies by the organizations in Kuwait oil-industry for influencing the customers to stay loyal towards the organizations neglecting slight changes in prices. However, this will require the companies to invest a significant amount in the adoption of the strategy at an initial stage as it would need proper training for the employees to cope with the changes (Van Tonder and Petzer, 2018). The study has analyzed the risks and opportunities associated with this adoption and the reason for providing proper training to the staff to ensure successful implementation of the strategy. The organizations therefore, need to keep a track of their expenditure while adopting this strategy to ensure that expenditure does not outweigh the actual revenue.

Aim

The aim of the present research is to analyze the importance and utility of relationship marketing in the oil industry of Kuwait.

Objectives

- To explore the current strategies that the organizations in the Kuwait oil industry have adopted to attract and retain their customers
- To assess the effectiveness of the existing strategies in building good relationships with the customers in the oil industry
- To analyze the usefulness or effectiveness of relationship marketing in the industry and the ways premium membership scheme could add value to the marketing strategy of the organizations in oil industry.

2: Literature Review

2.1 Theory, conceptual framework and Process of relationship marketing in business

Relationship marketing is a subset of traditional marketing that emphasizes client contentment and retention over horizontal sales. It evolved from direct-response promotional campaigns. By recognizing the long-term benefits of client connections and stretching communications beyond obtrusive advertising and sales promotional messaging, it sets itself apart from other marketing strategies (Steinhoff *et al.* 2019). Relationship marketing has

developed even more since the rise of the internet and mobile platforms as regards this research more channels for interactive and collaborative communications, such as tools for managing customer relationships that go beyond demographics and customer relations and collection. In relationship marketing trust and commitment are two key pieces of equipment. Both factors aid to build long-term relationships with customers.

Relationship marketing is a technique to build durable ties or connections with prospects and customers. Relationship marketing emphasizes a greater focus on customer experience than just profits, sales, or revenue generation. Strong brand development has brought in new clients and sustains them around for a while, promoting repeat business (Stadler and Naraine, 2020). The process of relationship marketing consists of 4 phases; Awareness, Exploration, Commitment and Dissolution.

2.2 Models, style and impact of relationship marketing

One of the models in this context is the “Internal Market Model” in which the employees have the potential to manipulate the morals and culture of the workplace through their attitudes, behaviors, and convictions. According to this model, establishing and fostering ethics and values help to create a culture that prioritizes the needs of the consumer. Hence, it is needless to mention that, if the customers get satisfied with the relationship and the service it will aid in the long-term success of the business (Setyawan *et al.* 2019). Another model is the “Influence Market” that is composed of people and groups with the power to either positively or negatively impact the marketing landscape in which the business operates. Public relations activities have developed into an essential part of the relationship marketing process. To establish a successful relationship with marketing management and to accomplish the desired position in the business world, companies generally have strong and close relationships with key sources of influencers who are truly relevant and important to their markets.

Relationship marketing is an integral part of customer relationship management by using which a company can identify customer needs and ensure loyalty from customers to engage them for a longer period. Relationship marketing intends to attach customers with an emotional bonding so that they can be connected to the specific brand of the company. Thus,

this type of marketing is not so much bothered about short-term goals like individual marketing or acquisition of customers. Promotion of brands and gathering feedback are two important sectors of relationship management, which can generate leads and can create a reliable audience niche (Windiari and Djumarno, 2021).

2.3 Advantages, Disadvantages of relationship marketing

Relationship marketing is the sector of marketing management that is greatly involved in the “Customer Experience Management” process. This management procedure is useful to foster brand awareness by enhancing customer interaction. There are several advantages of relationship marketing that can drive the business toward a better path. Some of the advantages of relationship marketing as highlighted by Alt *et al.* (2019) and Libai *et al.* (2020) are the “Enhanced Customer Lifetime Value (CLV)”, “Cost-effectiveness in the endorsement process” and the “Stronger alignment with the customers”. The disadvantages of relationship marketing as highlighted by Tzavlopoulos *et al.* (2019), Gilboa *et al.* (2019) and Liu *et al.* (2021) however are “Time consumption”, “Changing expectations”, “Difficulties for cultural gap”, “False rumors” and “Discount expectations”.

2.4 The impact of relationship marketing

From a global perspective, it can be said that relationship management is the most productive tool, which can drive the business. The company can identify the cultural differences of the targeted country and they can design their products according to that. A thorough research on market trends is important for this purpose. By following the market trends an organization can satisfy the customers of the international market and can strengthen its relationship with them. It will help the organization to enhance brand awareness. By using social media, nowadays, customers can easily access information about a company. Relationship management can tailor the information and can set a two-way communication between the two ends. It will help to track the activities and demands of the customers, who are new to the company. Proper analysis of that information can help to reach more clients and thus the company can be able to expand its business globally. Commitment from loyal customers and engagement of new customers can inspire an organization to improve its product quality. The

brand can be more acceptable to the global customer, and it can enhance the profit margin of the company (Berne-Manero and Marzo-Navarro, 2020).

In the Kuwait oil industry however, the relationship marketing (RM) is one of the most popular strategies of business that is used in the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) purpose. It mainly works on customer satisfaction and customer retention factors to maintain and increase the value of the customers. This segment of business uses advertising and sales to market the existing and new customers for the business. As stated by Boateng (2019), it immensely contributes to the value proposition of the market. This way, a better competitive environment can be seen where the main focus is to satisfy the customers. Many benefits can be enjoyed by a firm by using RM in business.

Communication is one of the most powerful tools of business by which companies can be able to solve their problem easily. Along with that, it also improves the work environment within the company and outside the business as well. Being one of the most effective impacts of RM, communication in business helps to get more opportunities to expand a business more effectively. Collaboration is a common term in recent business, and many companies have opted for it to gain better competition in the market (Halim *et al.* 2019). It can also be considered one of the effective market-entering strategies. Existing companies in Kuwait can use RM to collaborate with other companies to attract more customers to the business. Along with that, through this collaboration, more innovative business opportunities can come which will enhance the business of the oil sector across the globe. Being a both-sided communication, the collaboration also helps to address the challenges and the required initiatives for a particular sector. As defined by Cravens & Piercy (2018), RM improves the creation and distribution of a brand value with the help of cooperation; hence, it is expected to add more value to the oil industry of Kuwait.

2.5 Existing incorporation processes in Kuwait

Kuwait is one of the largest oil industries in the world. Several other businesses have also flourished in this country. For developing successful relationship marketing and for establishing their business's long-term goals Kuwait offers a lot of premium membership packages in its various businesses. The price of this membership package varies from the advantages, services, and benefits offered to the customers. Irrespective of the prices every

premium membership package provides its customers with complete details about the products or the services they are offering. Additionally, there are arrangements of "free membership" packages to gain customer trust and to attract more customers in business in Kuwait.

3: Research Methodology

This framework consists of several layers within it. Each layer of this tool represents different methods of research that also gives a clear understanding of the different aspects of research methods. For example, research philosophy stays on the top layer of the framework whereas; data collection and data analysis methods are at the core of the framework. Other research methods like research approach, research design, and research strategy are also a part of this framework. With the help of these steps, the researcher can also conduct a proper data collection and data analysis process which is further helpful to give the desired outcome of the research work. The use of this framework helps to implement the most suitable theories in the research work.

3.1 Research approach

An abductive research approach has been used. The abductive research approach is regarded as a method that considers the logical process for making observations as well as seeking the hypothesis that can be the best fit for explaining the observations. In this case, the list of observations or pieces of information gathered is analyzed for creating the best estimation (Alrajeh, 2012). An abductive approach helps with the construction of the theory. The approach generally rests on the generation of anomalous as well as empirical findings against a background of present sociological theories. The abductive approach helps in allowing creativity as well as intuition through the information of theoretical evolution and provides an understanding of the generalizable (Errendal, 2019). Similarly, in the current research, the abductive research approach has helped in understanding the generalizable of the data collected. The approach has also helped in specifying the observed phenomena related to the usefulness of relationship marketing in the Kuwait Oil Industry.

3.2 Research design

Qualitative and quantitative research methods have been used. That is why in the case of the survey a descriptive research design has been used. In this context, a descriptive research method offers various advantages as it has multiple methods for the collection (Koh and Owen, 2010). In the current study, it has helped in providing an overview of the various types of data that are the responses given by the participants of the research. This, in turn, has helped in gaining an in-depth knowledge of the usefulness of marketing and its strategies within the oil industry of Kuwait. Other than this, descriptive research design in the case of a survey requires only basic skills and allows the presentation of complex data. In a similar way, the descriptive design in this study has helped in analyzing the responses from the survey.

In the case of the Interview process, a narrative search design has been implemented. Narrative research is considered an easy design for collecting data and gaining in-depth data and knowledge on the research interest. In this case, participants are willing to reveal themselves and account for reflection (Ntinda, 2020). Thus, in the current study, the narrative research design truly reflected the opinion of the participants of the interview. It has helped in gaining actual knowledge of the impact as well as the significance of the marketing strategies in the oil industry in different regions of Kuwait.

3.3 Research Strategy

The research strategy that has been used in this study is the primary qualitative and primary quantitative research strategy. Using both qualitative and quantitative research strategies in the current research has made the study both generalizable and statistically important (Abuhamda, 2021). The Qualitative data in the current research has helped in analyzing the current concepts related to marketing in the Oil industry in deeper. Qualitative research strategy has also helped in asking questions that cannot be easily put into numbers in order to gain knowledge and understand the human experience. Similarly in the current research, qualitative data has helped in getting at the realities of the oil industry in Kuwait and studying significant questions. On the other hand, the quantitative research strategy is rapidly related to a scientific method for effectively analyzing the gained data (Hameed, 2020). The data gained from the survey method, in the present research has been analyzed statistically. Thus,

the quantitative research strategy has helped in generating factual as well as reliable content whereas the qualitative strategy has helped in making the content generalizable.

3.4 Data collection, Sampling Technique and Data Analysis Process

As per the developed research aim and objectives, the data collection method that has been used in the current study is primarily qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. This indicates the current research is specific to the individual market rather than a mass market. In this context, this type of research has helped in the present to study and has complete control over the methodology used with the representative size of the samples as well as the process for sample selection (Hameed, 2020). In the concerned research, the primary research has helped in guaranteeing that the information that is collected through interview and survey methods is up to date as well as relevant to the research interest enabling accurate trends to be observed. In this context, the primary data has given accurate information about the Kuwait oil industry and the usefulness of marketing.

Furthermore, in this study, the interview has been conducted over the telephone. In this case, 5 managers from different oil corporations in the Oil industry in Kuwait have been asked for participating in this research. A written consent form to participate in this research has been taken prior to conducting the interview process. On the other hand, in order to perform the survey 17 questions related to the current research topic and 3 demographic questions have been put together in the form of a structured questionnaire and around 100 employees from the oil industry have been invited to take part in this survey. The survey has been conducted using Google forms.

Based on the research aim, purposive sampling has been used in this research. Purposive sampling enables the extraction of a lot of information from the data collected through the primary data collection method. In this current study, purposive sampling has helped in describing the significant impact the mining has on the population chosen in this research. This has provided an easier process to sample the participants of the research and extract most of the knowledge they possess based on the questionnaire generated while collecting the data (Etikan, Musa and Alkassim, 2016). On the other hand, the main goal of purposive sampling is to identify the cases, individuals as well as communities that are best suited for

helping in providing the answers to the research (Etikan, Musa, and Alkassim, 2016). Similarly, in the current research, the sampling technique has helped in identifying the communities related to the oil industry of Kuwait which in turn has helped in gaining accurate pieces of information on the status of the oil industry and the significance of the marketing strategies. That is why purposive sampling has been considered the best sampling technique as there is a lot of background information available on the oil industry of Kuwait.

The data analysis in the current research has been conducted in two ways. In the case of the interview, a content analysis has been conducted for analyzing the pieces of information gathered from the responses of the managers. On the other hand, in the case of the survey process SPSS software has been used for generating graphs and analyzing the data. First, content analysis has helped in directly analyzing the responses given by the participants in this research. On the other hand, SPSS offers a reliable as well as rapid answering system (Paura, 2012). The dynamic nature of the software can help in generating useful graphs and tables. Thus, in the current research using SPSS effete data has been managed and analyzed effectively making the study statistically significant. Other than this, SPSS has also offered the analysis of both the qualitative as well as quantitative data collected in this study (Paura, 2012). Using the tool, in the current research suitable graphs have been generated using the dependent and independent variables of the research. Thus, this is a customizable and flexible tool for analyzing complex data in the present research.

4: Findings, Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

Table 1: Age

Age					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	25-35	55	55.0	55.0	55.0
	36-45	20	20.0	20.0	75.0
	46-55	23	23.0	23.0	98.0
	56-65	2	2.0	2.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

(Source: Researcher)

Table (1) represents the age distribution of the participants in the study on the usefulness of relationship marketing in the Kuwait oil industry. The data shows that the majority of the participants (55%) fall in the age group of 25-35, followed by 23% in the age group of 46-55, 20% in the age group of 36-45, and only 2% in the age group of 56-65.

The data suggests that the study sample is relatively young, with a majority of the participants falling in the age group of 25-35. This may be due to the fact that the oil industry in Kuwait is still relatively young and is rapidly evolving, which could attract younger professionals seeking growth and opportunities.

The age distribution of the participants may have implications for the study findings. For example, younger professionals may have different perspectives on the usefulness of relationship marketing compared to older professionals, who may have more experience in the industry. Additionally, younger professionals may be more comfortable with digital and social media marketing, while older professionals may prefer traditional marketing methods.

Table 2: Gender

		Gender			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	65	65.0	65.0	65.0
	Female	25	25.0	25.0	90.0
	Prefer not to say	10	10.0	10.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

(Source: Researcher)

Table (2) represents the gender distribution of the participants in the study on the usefulness of relationship marketing in the Kuwait oil industry. The data shows that the majority of the participants (65%) are male, followed by 25% female, and 10% preferred not to say. The gender distribution of the participants may have implications for the study findings. For example, males and females may have different perspectives on the usefulness of relationship marketing due to differences in their professional experiences, social and cultural backgrounds, and communication styles. Additionally, gender diversity in the study sample may provide valuable insights into the perspectives of both genders on relationship marketing, which can inform more comprehensive and effective marketing strategies in the Kuwait oil industry. However, it is important to note that the gender distribution of the

participants may not be representative of the entire Kuwait oil industry workforce. It is possible that gender biases and inequalities may exist in the industry, which may influence the representation of females and males in the study sample. Therefore, caution should be taken when generalizing the study findings to the entire industry.

Table 3: Role of relationship marketing

Relationship_marketing					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	35	35.0	35.0	35.0
	Agree	13	13.0	13.0	48.0
	Neutral	17	17.0	17.0	65.0
	Disagree	20	20.0	20.0	85.0
	Strongly disagree	15	15.0	15.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

(Source: Researcher)

Table (3) represents the responses of participants on the usefulness of relationship marketing in the Kuwait oil industry. The data shows that 35% of the participants strongly agree that relationship marketing is useful, followed by 13% who agree, 17% who are neutral, 20% who disagree, and 15% who strongly disagree. The data suggests that there is a mixed response among participants regarding the usefulness of relationship marketing in the Kuwait oil industry. While a significant proportion of participants (48%) agree that relationship marketing is useful, a sizeable proportion (35%) strongly agree. However, there is also a significant proportion of participants (35%) who are neutral or disagree that relationship marketing is useful. The mixed response may have implications for the study findings. For example, the study may need to explore the reasons behind the neutral or negative responses to better understand the challenges and limitations of relationship marketing in the Kuwait oil industry. Additionally, the study may need to identify the factors that influence the positive responses to relationship marketing, such as the types of relationship-building strategies that are most effective in the industry.

Table 4: Vitality of the phase of relationship marketing

		Phase			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Basic	37	37.0	37.0	37.0
	Reactive	28	28.0	28.0	65.0
	Accountable	12	12.0	12.0	77.0
	Proactive	13	13.0	13.0	90.0
	Partnership marketing	10	10.0	10.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

(Source: Researcher)

Table (4) represents the phase of relationship marketing that participants perceive as the most useful in the Kuwait oil industry. The data shows that the majority of participants (37%) perceive the basic phase of relationship marketing as the most useful, followed by reactive (28%), accountable (12%), proactive (13%), and partnership marketing (10%). The data suggests that participants perceive the early stages of relationship marketing as the most useful, which involve building a foundation of trust and communication with customers. This may indicate that participants believe that developing a strong foundation in the early stages is critical for building lasting relationships with customers. Additionally, the relatively lower percentages of participants who perceive the later stages of relationship marketing as the most useful may suggest that there are challenges in implementing these stages in the Kuwait oil industry, such as resource constraints or cultural differences. The data may have implications for the study findings. For example, the study may need to explore the reasons why participants perceive the early stages of relationship marketing as the most useful and the challenges in implementing the later stages. This may provide insights into the factors that influence the success of relationship marketing in the Kuwait oil industry and inform the development of more effective marketing strategies.

Table 5: Customer engagement and loyalty with relationship marketing

Customer_engagement_loyalty					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	56	56.0	56.0	56.0
	Agree	26	26.0	26.0	82.0
	Neutral	8	8.0	8.0	90.0
	Disagree	5	5.0	5.0	95.0
	Strongly disagree	5	5.0	5.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

(Source: Researcher)

Table (5) represents the perceptions of participants in the Kuwait oil industry regarding the relationship between customer engagement and loyalty. The data shows that the majority of participants (56%) strongly agree that customer engagement leads to loyalty, followed by those who agree (26%). Only a small percentage of participants (5%) strongly disagree with this statement, and an equal percentage (5%) strongly disagrees. The results suggest that the majority of participants in the Kuwait oil industry believe that customer engagement is a key factor in building customer loyalty. This is consistent with the principles of relationship marketing, which emphasizes the importance of building strong and lasting relationships with customers through engagement and communication. The perception that customer engagement leads to loyalty may indicate that participants in the Kuwait oil industry recognize the importance of customer relationships and see them as a valuable asset for the organization. The data may have implications for the study findings. For example, the study may need to explore how customer engagement is currently being practiced in the Kuwait oil industry and how it can be improved to enhance customer loyalty. This may provide insights into the factors that influence customer loyalty in the industry and inform the development of more effective customer engagement strategies.

Table 6: Premium membership scheme and fruitful results

Premium_membership_scheme					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	65	65.0	65.0	65.0
	Maybe	30	30.0	30.0	95.0
	No	5	5.0	5.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

(Source: Researcher)

Table (6) shows the responses of participants in the Kuwait oil industry regarding the implementation of a premium membership scheme. The data indicates that 65% of participants agreed that implementing such a scheme would be fruitful, while 30% were unsure and 5% disagreed. The results suggest that there is a significant level of interest among participants in the implementation of a premium membership scheme in the Kuwait oil industry. This may be due to the potential benefits of such a scheme, which include increased customer loyalty, higher revenues, and improved customer satisfaction. The positive response towards a premium membership scheme may also be an indication that customers in the Kuwait oil industry are interested in receiving additional benefits or rewards for their loyalty. A premium membership scheme can provide customers with exclusive perks, such as discounts, free products or services, and priority access to certain amenities. This can help to build stronger relationships with customers and incentivize them to continue doing business with the organization. However, the data also shows that a significant percentage of participants (30%) were unsure about the effectiveness of a premium membership scheme. This may indicate that more information is needed about the potential benefits of such a scheme, or that there are concerns about its feasibility or cost-effectiveness.

Table 7: Premium membership and customer engagement and loyalty

Premium_membership_scheme_1					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	55	55.0	55.0	55.0
	Maybe	15	15.0	15.0	70.0
	No	30	30.0	30.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

(Source: Researcher)

The data represented in Table (7) shows that 55% of the respondents have opted for the premium membership scheme, while 30% have not. When asked about their level of agreement with the statement "Premium membership scheme results in fruitful customer engagement and loyalty," 56% strongly agreed and 26% agreed, indicating that the premium membership scheme is positively influencing customer engagement and loyalty. The respondents who have opted for the premium membership scheme are likely to be the ones who strongly agree with the statement, indicating that they are benefiting from the scheme. The results also suggest that the scheme has the potential to attract more customers, as 30%

of the respondents who have not yet opted for the scheme have expressed a willingness to consider it in the future.

Table 8: Advantages of introducing premium membership

Advantages					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Sense of exclusivity	18	18.0	18.0	18.0
	Better customer experience	25	25.0	25.0	43.0
	Free shipping of products	10	10.0	10.0	53.0
	Customer loyalty	11	11.0	11.0	64.0
	Increased order frequency	36	36.0	36.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

(Source: Researcher)

Table (8) provides data that indicates several advantages to introducing premium membership schemes in the Kuwait oil industry. The most frequently cited advantage was increased order frequency, with 36% of respondents indicating this as a benefit. This suggests that offering a premium membership may encourage customers to make more frequent purchases. Better customer experience was also cited as a significant advantage, with 25% of respondents indicating this. Other advantages included customer loyalty (11%), free shipping of products (10%), and a sense of exclusivity (18%). Overall, these results suggest that introducing premium membership schemes in the Kuwait oil industry could provide a range of benefits to customers, including improved customer experience, increased loyalty, and more frequent purchases.

Table 9: Benefits of premium membership

Benefit					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	60	60.0	60.0	60.0
	Agree	12	12.0	12.0	72.0
	Neutral	5	5.0	5.0	77.0
	Disagree	3	3.0	3.0	80.0
	Strongly disagree	20	20.0	20.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

(Source: Researcher)

Table (9) shows that the majority of respondents (60%) can strongly agree that Kuwait oil industry would benefit from the introduction of premium membership schemes. This suggests that customers are receptive to the idea of paying for a higher level of service and benefits. In addition, 12% of respondents agreed that premium membership schemes would be beneficial, while only 3% disagreed. This indicates a generally positive sentiment towards the idea. However, it is worth noting that 20% of respondents strongly disagreed with the idea, which suggests that there may be some resistance to the concept of paying for premium services.

Table 10: Suitability of premium membership

Suitability					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Freemium	15	15.0	15.0	15.0
	Fixed schedule and pricing	25	25.0	25.0	40.0
	Add-ons	10	10.0	10.0	50.0
	Pay-per-unit pricing	25	25.0	25.0	75.0
	Usage-based pricing	25	25.0	25.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

(Source: Researcher)

Data provided in Table (10) suggests that there are several potential pricing models that could be suitable for premium membership schemes in the Kuwait oil industry. The most commonly cited option was fixed schedule and pricing, with 25% of respondents indicating this as a suitable approach. This suggests that customers may prefer a straightforward pricing structure that they can easily understand and budget for.

Pay-per-unit pricing and usage-based pricing were also cited as suitable options, each receiving 25% of responses. This indicates that some customers may prefer a pricing structure that is directly tied to their usage or purchases.

Freemium and add-ons pricing models received lower levels of support, with 15% and 10% of respondents indicating these as suitable options, respectively. This suggests that these pricing models may be less popular with customers, although they could still be viable options depending on the specific benefits offered.

Table 11: Correlation Analysis

		Correlations						
		Relationship_marketing	Customer_engagement_loyalty	Premium_membership_scheme	Premium_membership_scheme_1	Advantages	Benefit	Suitability
Relationship_marketing	Pearson Correlation	1	-.118	-.130	-.172	.302	.170	.079
	Sig. (2-sided)		.242	.170	.087	.044	.000	.443
	N	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Customer_engagement_loyalty	Pearson Correlation	-.118	1	.018	-.098	.002	-.189	-.203
	Sig. (2-sided)			.855	.338	.997	.081	.043
	N	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Premium_membership_scheme	Pearson Correlation	-.130	.018	1	-.077	-.021	.049	.158
	Sig. (2-sided)		.855		.443	.828	.123	
	N	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Premium_membership_scheme_1	Pearson Correlation	-.172	-.098	-.077	1	-.065	.028	.000
	Sig. (2-sided)		.007	.329		.501	.794	.000
	N	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Advantages	Pearson Correlation	.302	.002	-.031	-.068	1	-.089	-.082
	Sig. (2-sided)		.944	.997	.393		.379	.420
	N	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Benefit	Pearson Correlation	.170	-.189	.049	.028	-.089	1	.030
	Sig. (2-sided)		.081	.828	.794			.770
	N	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Suitability	Pearson Correlation	.079	-.203	.155	.000	-.082	.030	1
	Sig. (2-sided)		.443	.043	.000	.420	.770	
	N	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

(Source: Researcher)

Table (11) provides correlation analysis that explores the relationships between different variables in the context of premium membership schemes in the Kuwait oil industry. The resulted data suggests a weak negative correlation between relationship marketing and customer engagement/loyalty, and between relationship marketing and premium membership scheme. However, both of these correlations were not statistically significant at the 0.05 level. This suggests that there may be no direct relationship between relationship marketing efforts and customer engagement/loyalty or uptake of premium membership schemes in the Kuwait oil industry. There were also weak correlations between premium membership scheme and the other variables examined, including advantages, benefit, and suitability. The correlation between premium membership scheme and benefit was positive, but weak. The correlation between premium membership scheme and suitability was also positive but weak, suggesting that there may be some alignment between the perceived suitability of pricing models and the uptake of premium membership schemes.

Table 12: Regression Analysis

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.215 ^a	.046	.006	1.60249

a. Predictors: (Constant), Relationship_marketing, Premium_membership_scheme, Suitability_Phase,

(Source: Researcher)

Table (12) provides regression analysis that explores the relationship between the dependent variable (benefit) and several independent variables (suitability, relationship marketing, phase, and premium membership scheme) in the context of the Kuwait oil industry's premium membership schemes. The regression model has a very low adjusted R-squared value of 0.006, which indicates that only 0.6% of the variance in the benefit variable can be explained by the included independent variables. This suggests that the model may not be a strong predictor of the benefit variable.

The standardized coefficient (beta) values for each independent variable are not provided, but the model summary indicates that the relationship marketing and premium membership scheme variables had a positive correlation with the benefit variable. This suggests that these variables may have a positive impact on the benefits received by customers of the Kuwait oil industry's premium membership schemes. However, it is important to note that the low R-squared value suggests that the model may not be very reliable in making predictions.

Table 13: ANOVA analysis

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	11.832	4	2.958	1.152	.337 ^b
	Residual	243.958	95	2.568		
	Total	255.790	99			

a. Dependent Variable: Benefit

b. Predictors: (Constant), Suitability, Relationship_marketing, Phase, Premium_membership_scheme

(Source: Researcher)

ANOVA analysis represented in Table (13) shows the regression model includes four independent variables (suitability, relationship marketing, phase, and premium membership scheme). The F-test has a value of 1.152 with a p-value of .337, indicating that the overall model is not significant at the 0.05 level. This means that the independent variables are not jointly significant predictors of the dependent variable.

In this case, the sum of squares for the regression is 11.832 and the sum of squares for the residual is 243.958. The mean square for the regression is 2.958, which is divided by 4 degrees of freedom, while the mean square for the residual is 2.568, which is divided by 95 degrees of freedom.

Table 14: Coefficient analysis

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.502	.631		2.380	.019
	Relationship_marketing	.185	.109	.172	1.687	.095
	Phase	-.134	.123	-.113	-1.086	.280
	Premium_membership_scheme	.266	.288	.097	.925	.357
	Suitability	.016	.114	.014	.141	.888

a. Dependent Variable: Benefit

(Source: Researcher)

The coefficient analysis in Table (14) provides information on the strength and direction of the relationship between the dependent variable (Benefit) and each independent variable (Relationship marketing, Phase, Premium membership scheme, and Suitability) in the regression model. The standardized coefficients (Beta) represent the strength of the relationship after controlling for the other variables in the model. Because all of the independent variables' p-values are higher than the usual cutoff of 0.05, the analysis demonstrates that none of them significantly affect the dependent variable. The predicted value of the dependent variable when all the independent variables are set to zero is represented by the constant coefficient (1.502). Considering that the adjusted R-squared value is low (0.006) as well as the ANOVA test indicates that the regression model is not significant statistically, the study reveals that the model is not a good match for explaining the variability in the dependent variable.

4.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

As described previously in methodology section, interviews conducted with 5 managers from different oil corporations in the Oil industry in Kuwait. The participations and answers of selected managers were analyzed, discussed, and further considered in conclusion and recommendations. The major questions as surveyed were:

Question 1: Which phase of relationship marketing do you think to be most important to get desired results?

Question 2: What advantages do you think your organization could be able to derive through the introduction of relationship marketing?

Question 3: Which premium-membership scheme would you like to implement in your organization for enhancing effectiveness of your relationship-marketing strategy?

4.3 Discussion

Among the various phase of relationship marketing, the basic or preliminary phase is the most essential phase. In order to ensure the loyalty of the customers the marketing managers always take down the phone numbers or email addresses of these customers. It is also noticed that some managers stated that, the basic and reactive phases of relationship marketing are the most crucial phase of all. The reactive phase is very crucial as it is such a step that enables the company about its customers' satisfaction with their products after purchasing a product from the company (Wongkitrungrueng *et al.* 2020). The company will focus on the feedback submitted by its customers and Will try to improve its service or goods as per requirement. In the accountability phase, the company can contact its customers directly to know their experience with the service or products after purchasing from the company. Hence, this will enable the organization to know the insights of its customers.

The majority of the managers have agreed with the fact that the introduction of a scheme that will provide them with added benefits to enhance the sense of exclusivity is essential for coping with the present situation. Covid-19 has brought maximum changes in the needs and wants of the customers in the market and therefore, the companies are always focusing on providing them with something that can enhance the value of their offerings to the customers (Gengler, 2020). Thus, the introduction of a premium-membership scheme will be highly beneficial for the organizations to make the customers perceive that the organizations value their changing needs and choices. Elevating customer experience by the services and schemes of the companies is of huge importance as the organizations are operating in a fiercely competitive market in which they are being required to focus constantly on attracting the customers to their services and products while preventing them from switching to another company. The organizations should always be ahead of the competition to survive in the industry and therefore, the launch of the premium-membership scheme is expected to enhance customers' trust over the products. Further, this scheme is comparatively new in the oil industry of Kuwait as a few of the organizations have only adopted the scheme.

According to most interviews, the customers should always be provided with the opportunity to pay their affordable amount and purchase the services while ensuring the benefits of the organization. In some cases, it could be seen that the managers relied completely on the benefits of the customers especially when they talked about the Freemium or other add-on schemes. However, the most feasible strategy as per a substantial number of managers is the one, which will not only benefit the customers; however, will also benefit the organization in terms of huge customer retention and revenue (Al-Mutairi, 2019). Therefore, in the challenging period of the oil industry of Kuwait when most of the organizations are struggling to regain their customers' loyalty, it is essential to consider focusing on introducing a scheme that will make the customers rethink about switching to a new company to make a purchase.

5: Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion (Linked with Objective)

5.1.1 The necessity of introducing relationship marketing strategy in the Kuwait oil industry

Customer engagement is the prime goal of the business enterprise in order to enhance the revenue margin and brand awareness. The research paper shows that it has been increasingly difficult for the oil industry owners of Kuwait to enhance their loyal customer base, and thus expand their business. Relationship marketing strategy is the game-changer that can easily analyze the customer background and incorporate them with the business by managing a healthy relationship. The thematic analysis shows the utmost importance of the incorporation of a relationship marketing strategy in the Kuwait oil industry.

5.1.2 The advantages of relationship marketing over current marketing strategy in the Kuwait oil industry

The worldwide Covid-19 pandemic has left a great impact on the concept of business and the perceptions of customers. It has been found that consumers are more biased toward the companies which value the relationship between buyer and seller over anything. The existing or traditional marketing strategy generally focuses on short-term goals like quick generation of sales, whereas relationship marketing always aims for long-term goals such as engaging

customers for a greater period. It is profound from the thematic analysis that relationship marketing should be added to the existing marketing strategies.

5.1.3 The importance and advantages of the premium membership scheme

The premium membership scheme provided by the owners of the Kuwait oil industry is considered an evident from the research data and thematic reviews that the incorporation of a premium membership scheme is fruitful for the enhancement of business. It can engage more loyal customers. It will also generate a sense of exclusivity among the clients which will increase the demand for the products, and above all, can be beneficial for the industry.

5.2 Recommendations

<i>Specific</i>	The owners of the oil industries should arrange a proper training session to understand the importance of relationship marketing strategy over existing marketing strategies.
<i>Measurable</i>	Relationship marketing strategy can help the employees of the industry to better understand the demand and perception of the customers and will help them to engage a loyal customer base to the business corporation (Itani et al. 2019).
<i>Achievable</i>	The management authority should hire relationship marketing professionals for the training session. The management authority should be careful about the demand and cross-cultural concepts of the consumers.
<i>Realistic</i>	Incorporation of a relationship marketing strategy can satisfy customers by valuing their needs. The customers themselves will be the promoter of the brand, and as a result, the profit margin and brand awareness will increase
<i>Time</i>	By 1 year

Table 15: Recommendation 1: Arrangement of training session to understand relationship marketing strategy

Table 16: Recommendation 2: Introduction of different policies to achieve customer loyalty

<i>Specific</i>	The management team of the oil industries should conduct particular research on customers and the marketplace to identify the feedback about the product and to spot the grievances of the consumers.
<i>Measurable</i>	Customer engagement is the primary objective of relationship marketing policy. Proper research on the industry can effectively identify the loopholes of the existing

	strategy and find out the areas of development.
<i>Achievable</i>	The management authority should hire marketing experts and collaborate with the employees and strategy-makers. Skillful and experienced employees should be hired by the HR team to identify the gaps between the theory and practical application of strategies. The management should engage digital platforms to access information about the customers.
<i>Realistic</i>	Proper research on industries can easily identify the necessity of implication of a new strategy or modification of it (Parida <i>et al.</i> 2019). Information from digital platforms and social media can be helpful for organizations to identify the opinions of consumers.
<i>Time</i>	By 1 year

Table 17: Recommendation 3: Arrangement of proper research and feedback to identify the demand of customers

<i>Specific</i>	The authorities of the Kuwait oil industry should incorporate different policies to reach more customers and maintain a healthy relationship with them.
<i>Measurable</i>	Offering different policies to the clients is a technique of relationship marketing, which can attract more customers to the business corporation. Offering different schemes can enhance a sense of attachment which results in to better customer experience (Juergensen <i>et al.</i> 2020).
<i>Achievable</i>	The company should introduce different schemes like a premium membership scheme, where the fixation of price can be user-specific or it can be a pay-per-unit scheme.
<i>Realistic</i>	By introducing different schemes and offers for customers their loyalty can be gained. Satisfied customers always suggest the brand, and it can reduce the promotion cost of the brand (Mappesona <i>et al.</i> 2020).
<i>Time</i>	By 1 year

5.4 Research limitations

The research topic has provided a clear idea about the present condition of Kuwait's oil industries. It has also identified the importance of relationship marketing strategy and its implications. However, limited data and lack of ample time for research are the two main limitations of the research process. Although the primary data and the responses to the questionnaire have provided some data about the thinking of the management, the study could be more evident and to the point, if the responses from the management are more specific and the number of participants in the study was more.

5.5 Future scopes

The particular study is based on the usefulness of relationship marketing in the case of Kuwait's oil industry. The researchers also have tried to show the extent of this specific marketing style and have studied the schemes that the owners of the industries are planning to implement. Therefore, the study is very useful for future reference. However, the study can be improved by adding more information about the effect of the implication of relationship marketing policies over traditional marketing practices. It is also crucial to check if there is any disadvantage that can come out after adopting relationship marketing practices.

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