CUSTOMER PERCEPTION AND RESPONSE TO ETHICAL NORMS IN LEGAL SERVICES MARKETING IN THE KESHEVERZI BANK OF IRAN

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ABSTRACT

Through a survey of customers of legal services providers in Iran, data were collected. Results from the analysis of data show that the four dimensions of ethical marketing norms contribute significantly and explain a significant variance in RQ and commitment. The results show that three dimensions of ethical norms (price and distribution norm, information and contract norm, and honesty and integrity norm) are significantly related with relationship quality and commitment. But Product and upgrading norm has no significant relationship with relationship quality and commitment. But RQ plays a mediating role in the relationship between marketing norms and commitment. The study shows that the three dimensions of marketing norms (price and distribution norm, information and contract norm, and honesty and integrity norm) are useful for effective legal services marketing. Moreover, taken together, the findings of the study suggest that legal practitioners can approach building quality relationship with customers and customer commitment through increased ethical norms.

Keywords: Contexts Ethics, Marketing norms, Relationship quality

1. INTRODUCTION

It is a pity that that legal service providers are dishonest, lack of principles and are self-centered, is in all incidences of unethical behavior within the legal profession which has led to unfavorable publicity. Even though the numbers of such incidences may be relative to the hype, it is unfortunate that when professional misconduct does happen, it disposed to attract wide and unfavorable publicity. This may be because the general public disposed to have higher expectations of quality of service provided by professionals (Grimshaw, 2001) which makes failures in ethical behavior endanger the reliability of a whole profession (Kerr & Smith, 1995) as well as the service provider–consumer relationship. Takala and Uusitalo (1996) acknowledge for better understanding of ethical marketing and called for more studies on the link between ethical behavior and relationship management. Angur & Natarajan, (1996) state that perceptions of pricing in the legal section, particularly in developing economies, have been investigated narrative and to a limited extent in the academic literature and rigorous research into ethical aspects of this vital section has remained sparse. The aims of this research are to reduce this sparseness. The ethical behaviors should be are rewarded because Legal services providers have to be ethical in their dealings. Toadies’, ethics is a good business for the long-term success of a companies and the society (Paine, 2003).

Ethical professional firms may attract the most ethical job candidates and these people are liable to be more productive and their conduct will reflect on employees. Paine (2003) suggests that ethics is an idea, that must be integral to a company's governance, leadership, and day-to-day management. High ethical norms creates trusting relationships (Satkunasingam & Ndubisi, 2006), and many successful organizations are believed to have gained from the value of trusting relationships (Ndubisi, 2011). When the legal service provider is necessarily ethical, the quality of the relationship with people can improve, leading to relationship commitment. But Epstein (2007) and Handy (2002) state that, law and ethics are not mutually exclusive but legal requirements frequently derive from and incorporate ethical precepts. Markets rely on rules and laws, as well as those laws and rules are depended on truth and trust, which may covered it, as well as exchange
relationship becomes unreliable that no one can play (Handy, 2002). Unfortunately, research on the subject of ethical norms and its consequences in Iran has remained limited, leading to a poor understanding of this phenomenon. As well as, the authors are not aware of any empirical work which has examined the impact of ethical norms on relationship outcomes in the legal service section either in Iran or elsewhere. Consequently, there is a limited knowledge which can improve legal services marketing, producer-consumer relationship and relationship outcomes. In the Iran context, legal services providers or practitioners are also known commonly as lawyers and advocates generally practice in the government or private section. Therefore, Iran provides an appropriate context for testing the research model, which investigates the effect of ethical norms of legal services providers on customer perceived relationship quality and commitment. The paper approaches its objectives through the lens of ethical, and relationship marketing theories.

2. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Many researchers have studied the subject of ethics on individual, organizational, and societal perspectives, covering different sections and professions, also researchers have used many theoretical perspectives to approach the subject (Deshpande, Joseph, & Prasad, 2006; Geva, 2006; Pajunen, 2006; Thompson & Hart, 2006). Moral philosophies (e.g. Hunt and Vittel, 1986, Reidenbach and Robin, 1990) have studied on the affect ethical decisions, and many theories offer insights as Legal practitioner's /profession's ethical ideology, belief system, informal and social norms are likely to guide behavior in ethical situations. A customer's decision to dis/continue service on ethical grounds depends on her/his ethical ideology. About the Equity theory (e.g., Adams, 1963; Swan and Oliver, 1989), they compare her/his input into a situation and the outcome from the situation with that of another person. Legal services providers must ensure fair treatment of all customers. Customers consider the treatments by/value from their legal service provider with that of another customer. They also compare ethical norms/behaviors of different legal service providers. Ethical decisions therefore, are made up of two broad types of moral philosophies — deontological and theological philosophies. Deontological theories focus on specific actions or behaviors of an individual, whereas the focus of theological theories is on the consequences of the actions or behaviors (Hunt & Vittel, 1986). There is also a virtue ethics (Hartman, 1998; Whetstone, 2001) which is refers to a qualitative characteristic, considered as part of a person's character. In contrasting the three ethics perspectives, a virtue is closer to an internal value, which deontological norms represent personal values or rules of behavior (Vittel, Rallapalli, & Singhapakdi, 1993) are the most useful in dealing with marketing activities. Allover, many theories offer insights as to how ethical situations arise, and how ethical norms and/or behaviors affect seller-buyer relationship and relational outcomes. Scholars (Hosmer, 1994a,b; Mayo & Marks, 1990) consider the relationship between ethics, morals and values, and provide useful insights on the decision-making process in ethical situations. Since individuals consider ethics in decision making, it is logical to say that ethical norms will have an effect on perceived relationship quality and commitment by legal services consumers in Iran. Equity theory is another helpful theoretical lens that how ethical norms can influence relationship quality and commitment. According to Walster, Berscheid, &Walster, (1973) Inputs are define as “the participant's contributions to the exchange, which are seen by the participant or an observer as entitling him to rewards or costs”. The outcomes are the positive and negative consequences that observer perceives the participant has incurred as a consequence of his relationship with another. Other Scholars studied the equity theory such as Swan and Oliver (1989), Alwin (1987) and Lapidus and Pinkerton (1995). Folger & Konovsky, (1989) studied on organizational justice, suggested that perceived organizational fairness commitment to the organization. According to fairness theory customers expect a certain level of distributive fairness, procedural fairness or interactional fairness; in exchange relationships (Adams, 1963; Anderson & Patterson, 2008; Palmer, Beggs, & Keown-McMullan, 2000). Fairness positively related with commitment (Ndubisi, 2011) and customer satisfaction (Anderson & Patterson, 2008). Palmer et al.’s (2000) in his finding show that the concept of fairness was important, the paper reasons that because individuals often perceive fair others as ethical, this can lead to improved relationship quality and commitment. Lawler (2001), in his research explain that social relationships are a source of emotions and he characterizes the different emotional effects of different exchange structures. The theory of social exchange including support from co-workers has been applied in a range of different contexts(Huseman & Hatfield, 1990), service loyalty
in relationships between firms and customers (Sierra & McQuitty, 2005) and supplier–distributor relationships (Kingshott & Pecotich, 2007). Similarly when a positive experience is felt by one party then the party would also act positively in the relationship, therefore, the reasons of social exchange theory is a relationship.

3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

The literature shows that many marketing decisions involve ethical considerations. But understanding is superficial regarding of how customers respond/react to un/ethical norms and behaviors of marketers. However, ethical issues in business have dramatically increased and academics and practitioners are interested in the area (Al-Khatib, Vitell, & Rawwas, 1997). It is also clear that ethical issues between sellers and customers and other marketing related activities have been the main ethics research (Ferrel & Gresham, 1985; Hunt & Vittel, 1986). But Prior studies identify that both general deontological norms and specific marketing-related norms influence ethical decisions (e.g. Hunt & Vitell, 1993, 1986).

Today, the issue of un/ethical marketing and consumption practices continues to influence major marketing academic and practitioner journals. The customers’ perspective on ethical issues has tried to understand the ethical decision making of consumers. Parasuraman, Berry, & Zeithaml,( 1985) suggested that customer dissatisfaction can result from any gap created between customer expectation and the actual outcome of the services rendered. The reasons for such gap may be attributable to unethical behavior of service providers (Satkunasingam & Ndubisi, 2006). Mohr & Bitner, (1995), suggest that service provider is playing a key role in creating customer satisfaction, including efforts to provide ethically sound service encounters. As such, ethical service providers more so than unethical ones are likely to achieve superior performance build quality relationship and gain customer commitment. Superior performances are to have unique capabilities that are hard to copy, which allows them to outperform their challengers (Bharadwaj, et al, 1993). The service manager goals are to provide a service performance in an ethical manner which meets customers’ expectations, (Bush, et al, 1997). Therefore, how un/ethical behaviors or norms of service providers are affect customer behaviors, and to have higher expectations on quality of service provided by professionals (Grimshaw, 2001), as well as service provider-consumer relationship. Takala and Uusitalo's (1996) suggest that the firms' level of ethics has an influence on organizational worth and improve customers' perceptions of fairness and reward obtained from an exchange. Scholars conceptualize marketing norms and develop a norms scale dealing with marketing activities (Singhapakti & Vittel, 1991) and Reidenbach and Robin (1990) and Reidenbach, et al, (1991) developed a multidimensional scale measuring ethical perceptions in marketing. While these studies contribute to the body of knowledge, as well as they have their shortcomings ranging from ignoring deontological norms and lack of reliability scores of different marketing decision making activities, to generic rather than marketing-specific norms. Vittel et al.’s (1993) marketing norms provide a comprehensive set of dimensions of marketers' deontological norms used in this study. These shows: price and distribution norms, information and contract norms, product and upgrading norms and general honesty and integrity norms. As such only the four marketing norms were modeled in the present study as direct predictors of relationship quality and commitment, as well as indirect predictors of commitment (through relationship quality).

4. ETHICAL NORMS, RELATIONSHIP QUALITY AND COMMITMENT

As exchange relationships that are characterized by high ethical norms and behaviors have the powerful to shape perceived relationship quality by exchange parties positively. Levitt (1986) defines relationship quality as a bundle of intangible values which services and results in an expected interchange between buyers and sellers. Another relationship quality is described as the depth and climate of a relationship (Ndubisi, 2007). Relationship quality also refers to a customer's perception of how well the whole relationship fulfills the expectations, predictions, goals and desires of customers (Jarvelin & Lehtinen, 1996). Therefore, the different contexts of these studies that are the condition and strength of a marketing relationship have strong influence on relationship outcomes. In line with past studies, the present research reasons that the condition of a relationship (including high ethical norms and behaviors) can engender favorable perception of relationship quality as shown in the following hypothesis.

H1. Significant and positive relationships occur among (a) price and distribution norm, (b)
information and contract norm, (c) product and upgrading norm, (d) honesty and integrity norm and relationship quality.

This study also suggests that ethical norms of legal service providers not only improve customer relationship quality perception, but also influence their commitment both directly and indirectly. Wilson (1995) argues that commitment is the most common dependent variable used. Commitment is a key foundation of marketing relationship, and it is also a useful construct for gauging the likelihood of customer loyalty (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Researchers defines commitment as an underlying desire to maintain valued relationship (Moorman, Zaltman, & Deshpande, 1992). Commitment exists only when the relationship leads to a higher obligation to make it succeed and mutually satisfying (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Mowday, Porter, and Steers (1982) state that since commitment is higher among individuals, they received more value from a relationship, highly committed customers should be willing to reciprocate the effort on behalf of a firm. Prior research shows a positive relationship between commitment and relationship quality (Ndubisi, 2007; Wong & Sohal, 2002). Some other researchers on consumers (Dubinsky, Natarajan, & Huang, 2005) and marketing personnel (Bass, Barnett, & Brown, 1998) suggested that moral philosophy is a determinant of individual’s reactions to business practice. Regarding to these studies this paper postulates a positive relationship between ethical norms and commitment, as well as relationship quality and commitment.

H2. Positive relationships happen among (a) price and distribution norm, (b) information and contract norm, (c) product and upgrading norm, (d) honesty and integrity norm and commitment.

H3. A positive relationship happens between relationship quality and commitment.

The mediating role of relationship quality was examined in the relationship between ethical norms and commitment. Different findings in the relationship such as conceptualize relationship quality as a mediator, conceptualization of RQ as a mediator in the relationship between independent and dependent variables (Ndubisi, 2011; Zhao, Lynch, & Chen, 2010) is consistent with our conceptualization of ethical norms as antecedents of relationship quality which in turn positively influences customer commitment, therefore, creates challenges for researchers and managers (Athanasopoulou, 2009). To establish mediation we follow the suggestions of Baron and Kenney (1986).

H4. Relationship quality mediates in the relationship between (a) price and distribution norm, (b) information and contract norm, (c) product and upgrading norm, and (d) honesty and integrity norm and commitment.

5. METHODS

In this research we use both primary and secondary data. Secondary data were used to identify the gaps and to understand the perceptions and behaviors of users of legal services in Iran. The location of the study was Kurdistan province kesheverzi bank, Iran, and the respondent’s showed customers of legal service companies whose list served as the study's sampling frame. Due to the voluntary nature of the study, only the banks accepted the invitation to participate in the study were involved eventually. The survey lasted for a period of six weeks and resulted in a total of 484 usable responses provided by 435 customers and 49 corporate bank branches. The key informant method was used and only customers with ongoing business relationship with the participating legal firms were requested to respond to the questions. The corporate customers were represented by the organizations' secretary or director/manager of legal services division/department, based on key informant technique. Key informants are viewed as appropriate respondents if appropriate selection procedures are used (John and Reve, 1982). Thus, using guidelines on selecting key respondents from previous research (Campbell, 1955), key informants for corporate customers were chosen on the basis of their knowledge of the research issues, their formal role in the organization and willingness to respond. By comparing early and later responses across survey items, non-respondent bias was tested and also customers and corporate bank branches were compared (Armstrong and Overton, 1977). There was no statistical differences among variables were identified. The potential for bias was integrated by demographic variables in the model as control variables. The questionnaire items were adapted from past studies and revalidated in the present. The marketing norms scale developed by Vittel et al. (1993) was used to measure ethical norms of legal services providers. The four dimensions of the marketing norms scale related to the legal service
section in Iran namely: price and distribution norms, information and contract norms, product and upgrading norms, and honesty and integrity norms were used. Relationship quality items were adapted from Ndubisi (2007), and the items for commitment were adapted from Morgan and Hunt (1994) and Ndubisi (2011).

6. RESULTS

6.1. Factor analysis

The results of the first factor analysis show that 13 items loaded on four dimensions with total variance of 65.92%. (Table 1) four items loaded on price and distribution norm dimension with a variance of 17.87%, information and contract norm’s four items contributed a variance of 17.45%, product and upgrading’s norms with two items contributes a variance of 14.53%, and honesty and integrity norms with three items contributes 13.089% variance. Results of the second factor analysis conducted on relationship quality (mediating variable) and commitment (dependent variable) shown in Table 2. Total of explained variance is 78%, and relationship quality contributes 47% of the variance while commitment had a variance of 31%. six items loaded on the two dimensions, including 4 items of relationship quality and 2 items of commitment. Two commitment items due to high cross loading were excluded (Table 2). Internal consistency of the instrument was tested via reliability analysis. The reliability estimates (Cronbach’s alpha) shown here suggest a high degree of reliability as the results exceeds the 0.60 (Hair, et al, 1998) lower limit of acceptability.

6.2. Direct effect of relationship quality on commitment

The study also evaluated the direct effect of relationship quality on commitment. The result of this analysis shows that relationship quality contributes significantly (F=323.85; p-value.001) and responsible for 56% of the variations in commitment. There is a significant direct relationship between relationship quality and commitment (β=.742; t-value=17.068; p-value.001). The positive sign of the estimates shows that the higher the relationship quality, the greater the level of commitment. Therefore strong the H3 of this study is accepted (Table 4).

6.3. Mediating effect of relationship quality

The mediating effect of relationship quality regarding ethical norms with commitment on the bases of Baron and Kenney’s (1986) recommendation was examined on the following condition: (a) variations in levels of the independent variable significantly responsible for variations in the presumed mediator, (b) variations in the mediator significantly responsible for variations in the dependent variable, and (c) when item (a) and item (b) are controlled, a previously significant relation between the independent and dependent variables is no longer significant or it is significantly decreased. Table 5 shows the results of the mediating effect of relationship quality, PDN, ICN, PPN and HIN which were introduced in the regression model in phase 1.

that overall, PDN, ICN, PPN, and GHIN contribute significantly (F=40.295; p-value.001) and responsible for 40% of the variations in commitment. Further observations shows: a significant relation between PDN (β=.204; p-value.01), ICN (β=.215; p-value.01), HIN (β=.230; p-value.01) and commitment at 5% significance level. There is no significant relationship between PPN (β=.100; p-value=.104) and commitment at 5% significance level. These results accept hypotheses H2a, H2b and H2d and the rejection of hypothesis H2c. Therefore, for the lack of a significant effect of product and upgrading norms quality and commitment, this is by the government on relationship from promoting or advertising their offerings to the public, may be the legal company in Iran restricted. Thus, customers may not be in a position to evaluate this dimension and its effect on their perceived relationship quality and commitment to their legal services providers.
and relationship quality in phase 2, with commitment as the dependent dimension.

Table 5 shows an increase of 16% in the coefficient of determination (R2) occurring between model 1 and model 2.

There is no mediation effect of relationship quality for the relation of PPN with commitment. This is because the result for this dimension desecrates the condition (a) of the test of mediation. But, the beta coefficients have decreased significantly between model 1 and model 2 for all dimensions of ethical norms. Such increase in R2 and decrease in beta coefficients explain the mediating effect of relationship quality in the relation of PDN, ICN and HIN with commitment. Therefore, relationship quality mediates in the relation of PDN, ICN and HIN with commitment. These findings accept H4a, H4b and H4d and the reject H4c.

7. IMPLICATIONS

7.1. Theoretical implications

According to the existing theories of ethics, equity and social exchange we developed the framework of the study. The dimensions of ethical norms (price and distribution norms, information and contract norms, product and upgrading norms and honesty and integrity norms) were examined in the context of legal services marketing and were found to be strong predictors of relationship quality and commitment. The result of this study corroborates over some of the earlier studies (Ndubisi, 2007, 2011) by locating the relation between ethical norms and relationship marketing constructs in the legal service section in Asia. The strong empirical evidence for a direct effect of ethical norms on relationship quality and commitment, and the indirect effect of ethical norms on commitment through relationship quality, supports the integration of relationship quality in modeling the effect of ethical norms of service providers on long-term commitment of customers. Murphy, Lacznia, & Wood, (2007) suggest that the ethical relationship marketing are the virtues of commitment among others. Murphy et al. (2007) define marketing ethics as “the systematic study of how moral standards are applied to marketing decisions, behaviors and institutions, also, provides empirical evidence for a direct impact of ethical norms of legal practitioners on relationship quality perception and commitment of customers. Altogether, the hypotheses support the perspective that ethical norms can improve relational outcomes. The study also contributes to the theories of ethics, equity, and social exchange, and presents them as appropriate lenses for understanding ethical norms and relationship outcomes in legal services marketing.

7.2. Managerial implications

It is important to build on the ethical norms of the legal firm, because In order to create quality legal practitioner–customer relationship leading to commitment, it is important to build on the ethical norms of the legal firm. Therefore, legal service providers that want to build relationship quality with customers and have committed customers have to try to ensure high ethical standards. This can be done by maintaining high price and distribution norm. Second, they should release all information regarding all substantial risks related with service usage to customers, release changes in service components which might change the service or impact on customer’s decision to or not engage the legal firm, and treat customers fairly. Moreover, the service provider is ensuring high ethical norm of information and contract. Legal services providers should also ensure high ethical standards in terms of honesty and integrity norm. All this regarding to applicable laws, customer service guidelines, representing the education, training and experience of its lawyers this can be done, because being honest in serving customers, employees and avoiding any situation that can lead to conflict and compromise. This action would be very useful in the current marketing environment. It is documented in the literature that customers support ethical service providers and carry negative word or mouth communications against errant service organizations and even try to persuade other customers to defect to the competition (Ndubisi, 2013). This study shows, practitioners' ethical standards can influence their personal and organizational worth. High moral standards can improve customers' perception of fairness and increase the reward obtained from exchange which leads to long run survival of the business (Ndubisi, 2013). As firms and nonprofit organizations emphasize service as a ruling logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2004), the section will experience public scrutiny and public reaction (favorable or unfavorable); as such service organizations and individual providers must increase their ethical standards.
7.3. Policy implications

The behaviors of legal practitioners in Iran fall short of current requirements and can be improved and controlled through, regulations and laws. Hence, there are many regulations created for this reason by government policy makers. Therefore, the existence of these regulations still has the reputation of being unethical, so alternative approaches need to be considered by policy makers. If the legal service section is made aware of the organizational worth of creating services in an ethical environment, there may be less unethical behaviors. Therefore, rather than creating more regulated laws there may be a need to create greater awareness of the consequences of un/ethical behaviors. This is one of the government policy makers can contribute to the overall ethical climate of Iranian legal service section, and services in general.

8. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Customer to discuss their relationship with lawyers is difficult. But it is easy for customers to answer the questionnaire based on personal experience rather than give their views on behalf of their company’s relationship with its lawyer/s. Finding appropriate persons to complete the questionnaire was necessary as it can only be answered by persons who have used legal services and have some relationship with the service provider. This research used the key informant technique (Campbell, 1995) where key informants are chosen on the basis of their knowledge of the research issues as well as their formal role and their willingness to respond (Ndubisi, 2013). The results of this method by corporate customers are relatively in a low response. Future research should explore the link between ethical norms and dimensions of relationship quality such as trust, communication, and conflict handling, which are improve firm–customer relationship. Other constructs which may be integrated into the ethical norms model are customer satisfaction and loyalty, as these are desirable relational outcomes for the service industry. The scope of this study to customers of legal firms in Iran was limited. Further research in this area may consider the possible moderating effect of demography and ethical ideologies in the relationship between ethical norms and relational outcomes.

9. CONCLUSIONS

This study realizes its actual estimation whether or not ethical norms of legal practitioners have significant impact on perceived relationship quality and commitment of customers. Ethical norms in this study shows price and distribution norms, information and contract norms, product and upgrading norms, and honesty and integrity norms. Except for product and upgrading norm, all other dimensions of ethical norms are strong predictors of relationship quality and commitment. The insignificant impact of upgrading norm can be attributed to the restrictive nature of professional advertising and upgrading in Iran, leading to customers not having the experience of that aspect of legal service to provide an informed decision or perception. According to data collected from customers of legal practitioners in Iran, this study confirming that ethical norms have significant impact on relationship quality and customer commitment. Customer’s labeled to perceive relationship quality and commitment when legal practitioners have own ethical norms. Similarly, the findings of the study suggest that legal practitioners can approach building quality relationship with customers and customer commitment through increased ethical norms.

REFERENCES


Table 1
Factor and reliability analyses of ethical norms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key dimensions and items — ethical norm</th>
<th>Loadings</th>
<th>Communali ties</th>
<th>Cronbac h’s Alpha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F1 — price and distribution norms (variance=19.28 0%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.852</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PDN1. The service provider identifies the cost of services to their customers</td>
<td>.623</td>
<td>.547</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PDN2. The service provider does not use forces within its marketing channel</td>
<td>.671</td>
<td>.572</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PDN3. The service provider does not discriminate in charging their customers</td>
<td>.801</td>
<td>.742</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F2 — information and contract norm (variance=18.41 0%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>878</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICN1. The service provider shows information regarding all substantial risks related with service usage to their customers</td>
<td>.768</td>
<td>.678</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICN2. The service provider treats their customers fairly.</td>
<td>.616</td>
<td>.669</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICN3. The service provider meets its obligations and responsibilities in timely manner</td>
<td>670</td>
<td>.589</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICN4. The service provider supports the practice and promotion of a professional ethics.</td>
<td>.542</td>
<td>.627</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F3 — product and promotions norm (variance=16.69 0%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.832</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FPN1. The service provider does not advertise its services</td>
<td>.802</td>
<td>.670</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FPN2. The</td>
<td>.779</td>
<td>.778</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
service provider does not carry out deceptive sales promotions.

F4 — honesty and integrity (variance=14.08 4%)

GHI1. The service provider always represents the education, training and experience of its lawyers.

.781 .746

GHI2. The service provider is always honest in serving customers, employees and the public.

.712 .732

GHI3. The service provider does not participate in conflicts of interest without prior notice to all parties involved

.651 .642

desirable

RQ2. My relationship with the service provider meets with my goals .767 .800

RQ3. My relationship with the service provider fulfills my expectations .816 .822

RQ4. Overall, I have a good relationship with the service provider .803 .809

F2 — commitment (variance=29.91 8%)

CT1. My commitment to the service provider is very important to me 858 812

CT2. I am committed to the service provider .787 .761

Table 3: Direct effect of ethical norms on relationship quality and commitment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Relationship quality</th>
<th>Commitment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>β (t-value; p-value)</td>
<td>β (t-value; p-value)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price and distribution norm (P DN)</td>
<td>.302 (.54.098; 0.000)</td>
<td>.204 (2.598; 0.005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information and contract norm (ICN)</td>
<td>.265 (4.123; 0.000)</td>
<td>.215 (2.783; 0.004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product and promotion norm (PPN)</td>
<td>.019 (.401; 0.596)</td>
<td>.100 (1.589; 0.101)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honesty and integrity norm (HIN)</td>
<td>.301 (4.978; 0.000)</td>
<td>.230 (3.089; 0.002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>.767</td>
<td>.6290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>.599</td>
<td>.408</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2

Factor and reliability analyses — relationship quality and commitment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key dimensions and items — relationship quality and commitment</th>
<th>Loadings</th>
<th>Communali ties</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F1—relationship quality (variance=45.28 7%)</td>
<td>.742</td>
<td>.934</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ1. My relationship with the service provider is</td>
<td>.742</td>
<td>.704</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Direct effect of ethical norms on relationship quality and commitment.
### Table 4

**Direct effect of relationship quality on commitment.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Commitment</th>
<th>β (t-value; p-value)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td></td>
<td>(5.746; 0.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship quality</td>
<td>.760</td>
<td>(17.068; .000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>.742</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>.577</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AR²</td>
<td>.575</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F (Sig)</td>
<td>323.85</td>
<td>(.000)</td>
</tr>
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</table>

### Table 5

**Mediating effect of relationship quality**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent variables</th>
<th>Model 1 regression without relationship quality</th>
<th>Model 2 regression with relationship quality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PDN</td>
<td>.192 (.008)</td>
<td>.012 (.866)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICN</td>
<td>.217 (.098)</td>
<td>.053 (.406)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPN</td>
<td>.102 (.097)</td>
<td>.072 (.141)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GHIN</td>
<td>.230 (.007)</td>
<td>.041 (.499)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship quality</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.643 (.000)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R² change=.171;

F change=98.79;

Sig.=.000.