



Theoretical and Empirical Analysis of Relational Marketing in Educational Institutions: A Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

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The rapid digital transformation in the post-pandemic era has significantly reshaped the educational landscape, making it essential for institutions to adopt modern marketing strategies to remain competitive. This research explores the role of relational marketing in enhancing institutional reputation, student loyalty, and retention, particularly in the context of Indonesian educational institutions. The study aims to understand how relational marketing techniques, including CRM systems, digital branding, and social media engagement, can be effectively implemented to foster long-term relationships with students, parents, and alumni. A Systematic Literature Review (SLR) was employed to synthesize relevant studies from 2021 to 2025, focusing on relational marketing in education. The findings reveal that relational marketing strategies significantly contribute to student satisfaction and retention, with technology playing a pivotal role in personalizing services and communication. However, challenges such as limited resources and technological adoption remain. The study concludes that overcoming these challenges and integrating relational marketing strategies effectively can ensure the long-term sustainability and competitiveness of educational institutions in a digital era.

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid digital transformation in the post-pandemic era has significantly altered the landscape of education, making it crucial for educational institutions to adapt to modern marketing strategies (Filho et al., 2024). The increasing competition among both public and private educational institutions requires effective approaches to attract and retain students (Funeka et al., 2022). This research is essential because it explores how relational marketing can offer a strategic advantage in this context, enhancing institutional reputation and student loyalty. The growing role of technology, especially

social media and digital branding, has shifted the way educational institutions connect with potential students and their families. This research will contribute to understanding how such marketing techniques can foster long-term relationships, driving both student retention and satisfaction, which is vital in today's competitive educational environment (Fuadiy et al., 2025; Rahayu et al., 2025). By examining relational marketing in education, this study addresses a fundamental issue that could directly impact the future success of educational institutions in a highly digitalized world.

Educational institutions face several challenges, particularly in a market that has become increasingly digital and competitive (Hashim et al., 2022). One of the major problems is the difficulty in sustaining student loyalty and ensuring long-term engagement after the enrollment process. With the growing number of institutions offering similar programs, students and parents now prioritize more than just academic quality when selecting an institution. The challenge lies in understanding the changing needs and preferences of modern society and how educational institutions can address these concerns through marketing strategies (Basri et al., 2024). Moreover, many institutions in Indonesia still struggle with limited resources, both in terms of funding and human capital, which hampers their ability to implement advanced relational marketing techniques effectively. These problems highlight the need for educational institutions to adapt to new marketing approaches that not only focus on attracting new students but also maintain existing relationships with key stakeholders like students, parents, and alumni (Nurchaya et al., 2024; Juliana et al., 2025).

In practice, many educational institutions have failed to maximize the potential of relational marketing, which is crucial for maintaining long-term relationships with students, parents, and alumni. Despite the increasing use of digital technologies, many institutions still rely on traditional marketing methods that are no longer sufficient in today's competitive environment. For example, educational institutions in Indonesia often face challenges in utilizing customer data effectively, which limits their ability to personalize their marketing strategies. Furthermore, there is a notable gap in the integration of modern technologies such as CRM (Customer Relationship Management) systems, digital branding, and social media engagement, which are essential in maintaining a dynamic and personalized relationship with the community. The lack of these technologies leads to lower student retention rates and weakens the institution's competitive edge (Karlina et al., 2025; Mashita, 2025). Therefore, understanding how relational marketing can be more effectively implemented within educational institutions is crucial to their sustainability and growth (Juliana et al., 2025; Mashita, 2025).

Previous research has extensively explored the concept of relational marketing in various sectors, including education. Studies have shown that the implementation of relationship-based marketing strategies significantly influences student loyalty, retention, and institutional reputation (Nurcahya et al., 2024; Asyiah et al., 2024). However, there remains a research gap in understanding the specific barriers that prevent educational institutions from fully adopting these strategies, particularly in developing countries like Indonesia. While existing literature emphasizes the importance of digital marketing and CRM systems, it fails to address the contextual challenges faced by educational institutions in Indonesia, such as limited resources and the lack of integration between marketing and academic departments. This research seeks to fill these gaps by investigating the practical application of relational marketing in the Indonesian educational context, providing both theoretical and empirical insights that can guide future strategies.

In addition, many studies have focused on the theoretical aspects of relational marketing, with fewer addressing its empirical application in the education sector. The gap in empirical data, particularly in the context of Indonesia, leaves a significant opportunity to investigate how these marketing strategies can be practically implemented in educational institutions. This research will contribute by analyzing the real-world obstacles institutions face, offering insights into how they can better leverage technology, data, and personalized services to improve student and parent satisfaction (Karlina et al., 2025; Letavia et al., 2025). It also aims to identify best practices that can be adopted by educational institutions to enhance their marketing strategies in the digital age.

The novelty of this research lies in its focus on the Indonesian educational context, a region that has yet to fully explore the application of relational marketing in educational institutions. While the concept of relational marketing is widely acknowledged in the global education sector, its practical implementation in Indonesia has been limited. This research aims to provide new insights by bridging the gap between theory and practice, especially in light of the rapid digital transformation in the education sector. By identifying the barriers to the adoption of relational marketing and proposing solutions tailored to local conditions, this study is positioned to offer valuable contributions to the academic literature and the practical strategies of educational institutions in Indonesia.

This research seeks to answer the question: How can educational institutions effectively implement relational marketing strategies to improve student retention, satisfaction, and institutional reputation in the digital era? The study hypothesizes that relational marketing, particularly through the use

of CRM systems, digital branding, and social media engagement, can significantly enhance the competitiveness of educational institutions by fostering long-term relationships with students, parents, and alumni. Furthermore, the research argues that overcoming the challenges of resource limitations and human capital capacity is key to successfully implementing these strategies. The findings will provide practical recommendations for educational institutions on how to integrate relational marketing strategies into their operations, ensuring long-term sustainability and growth in a highly competitive environment.

Relational marketing is a crucial strategy for educational institutions to enhance their competitiveness in the digital age. By focusing on building long-term relationships with students, parents, and alumni, institutions can foster greater loyalty and satisfaction, which in turn will improve student retention and strengthen their reputation. However, for these strategies to be successful, institutions must overcome the challenges of limited resources, the lack of integration between marketing and academic departments, and the underutilization of technology. This research aims to provide valuable insights into how relational marketing can be effectively applied within Indonesian educational institutions, offering a comprehensive framework that institutions can adopt to improve their marketing efforts in an increasingly digital world.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research design employed in this study is a Systematic Literature Review (SLR), which is a methodical and structured approach to identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing all pertinent research on a specific topic within a defined period. SLR has been chosen for this study due to its ability to provide a comprehensive overview of existing literature, especially in the context of relational marketing in educational institutions. By using SLR, the research can map trends and offer evidence-based insights into the evolution of relational marketing theory and practice. This method is particularly suitable as it allows for the inclusion of various research types, which is critical when examining a multidimensional and dynamic field such as relational marketing. The use of SLR aligns with best practices in educational research, ensuring the reliability and validity of the findings (Andriani, 2022).

The focus of this systematic review is on educational institutions in Indonesia, with an emphasis on how relational marketing strategies are applied within the context of this region. The rationale for selecting this geographical location is twofold. First, relevance to context. Relational marketing practices in Indonesia's educational institutions are under-explored, yet there is significant potential for understanding how these practices can enhance educational

outcomes, student engagement, and institutional reputation. Second, contribution to national development. This research is aimed at providing insights that will benefit Indonesian educational institutions by proposing effective relational marketing strategies that are locally relevant and can contribute to the improvement of the education sector's sustainability and competitiveness.

Data for this study were collected through an extensive literature search conducted across a range of academic databases including Google Scholar, SINTA, Garuda, and Science Direct. The search process was guided by specific keywords such as "relational marketing," "relationship marketing," "educational institution," and "systematic literature review." These keywords were selected to ensure a comprehensive search that encompasses both theoretical and empirical studies relevant to the field of relational marketing in education. The period of publication for the reviewed articles spans from 2021 to 2025, allowing the study to reflect the most recent trends and findings in the field.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Relational Marketing Concepts and Frameworks

The findings of this study align closely with existing literature on relational marketing in educational institutions, emphasizing the importance of integrating various stakeholders institutions, educators, and students in fostering long-term, mutually beneficial relationships (Nurchaya et al., 2024). This study supports the idea that relational marketing in education is not only about attracting new students but also maintaining their loyalty and engagement throughout their educational journey. It echoes Sumarno et al. (2024) assertion that relational marketing should focus on both acquisition and retention, creating an ongoing engagement that enhances the educational experience. The research confirms that proactive communication, responsiveness to customer needs, and personalized services are critical for establishing these long-term bonds. The integration of relational marketing concepts into the daily operations of educational institutions, as highlighted by this study, is consistent with Asyiah et al. (2024), who argue that a competitive advantage in the education sector can be gained through customer centric approaches that focus on consistency, transparency, and meeting the diverse needs of students and parents.

The study's findings further corroborate the significance of the service marketing triangle, as proposed by Çelik (2025), in the context of educational institutions. Internal marketing, external marketing, and interactive marketing emerged as key elements for developing a comprehensive relational marketing

strategy. Internal marketing, which focuses on empowering educators and school staff as ambassadors for the institution, was found to be crucial for maintaining service quality and institutional reputation (Karlina et al., 2025). This aspect of the study is consistent with the notion that motivated and engaged staff directly impact the institution's overall effectiveness in delivering relational marketing strategies (Lim et al., 2022). External marketing, particularly through digital media, was confirmed to be an effective way to build brand awareness and reach prospective students and their parents. This is in line with the growing role of digital marketing in modern education (Zulyanti et al., 2023). The interactive marketing aspect of responsive two-way communication was also highlighted as an essential component for enhancing the student experience and fostering loyalty (Yusuf et al., 2024).

While the study's findings largely align with previous research, one key area of difference lies in the emphasis on information technology and Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems as integral tools for sustaining relational marketing efforts. Mitchell and Ackfeldt (2025) argue that the use of CRM systems is increasingly critical for maintaining customer satisfaction in educational settings, and this study provides further evidence of that. The research highlights how technology can facilitate continuous engagement, feedback collection, and the customization of services to individual student needs. This is a notable addition to the existing body of knowledge, which often focuses on traditional methods of relationship management without giving adequate attention to technological innovations that can enhance these processes. The role of technology in relational marketing within education seems to be expanding, and this study suggests that it will continue to be a pivotal factor in shaping the future of relational marketing strategies in the sector.

The theoretical implications of this research are significant in advancing our understanding of relational marketing in education. By integrating various marketing dimensions internal, external, and interactive this study contributes to the development of a more holistic framework for relational marketing in educational institutions. The research also adds to the growing body of knowledge by emphasizing the role of CRM and information technology in maintaining relationships with students and other stakeholders. The findings suggest that relational marketing in education requires continuous innovation, adaptability, and a deep understanding of the evolving needs of service users, particularly in the context of technological advancements. These insights offer valuable theoretical extensions to existing relational marketing models and can inform future research in the area.

From a practical perspective, the study offers actionable recommendations for educational institutions aiming to strengthen their relational marketing strategies. First, institutions should focus on creating a cohesive strategy that integrates internal, external, and interactive marketing efforts, ensuring that all stakeholders are engaged and aligned with the institution's values and mission. Furthermore, the adoption of CRM systems and other technological tools is crucial for enhancing communication and service customization, leading to higher levels of student satisfaction and retention. Finally, institutions should recognize the importance of long-term commitment and innovation in their relational marketing efforts. This study's findings suggest that maintaining a dynamic and adaptive approach to relationship management, along with a commitment to meeting the changing needs of students and parents, will enable institutions to build stronger loyalty and improve their overall reputation and competitiveness in the education market (Asyiah et al., 2024).

Key Strategies and Implementation

The findings of this research align with existing literature on the implementation of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) in educational institutions, particularly regarding the importance of identifying and responding to the needs and preferences of students and parents to provide personalized services (Karlina et al., 2025; Zulyanti et al., 2023). This study confirms that by utilizing data to map satisfaction and gather regular feedback, institutions can tailor their services more effectively to meet the expectations of their stakeholders (Yusuf et al., 2024). It also highlights the importance of proactive two way communication, which mirrors Lim and Rasul's (2022) assertion that fostering emotional attachment through open communication channels both online and offline plays a critical role in strengthening relationships with students and parents. The research supports the view that educational institutions must move beyond merely delivering educational content and embrace a more holistic approach that integrates both academic and emotional aspects of the student experience.

The findings of this study align with the growing importance of digital innovation in relational marketing strategies for educational institutions. Technological advancements in administrative, financial, and academic services are crucial for attracting and retaining students, as highlighted by Mitchell and Ackfeldt (2025). Digital innovation enhances the overall student experience by offering more streamlined, user-friendly services that meet the needs of tech-savvy students and parents. The research also emphasizes the significance of digital promotions, social media, websites, and mobile applications, which not

only promote institutions but also create platforms for real-time communication and engagement, as noted by Lim and Rasul (2022). A unique contribution of this study is the focus on engagement programs, such as workshops, webinars, and alumni interactions, which help build an institution's reputation and public trust. These programs, in conjunction with digital marketing efforts, foster a sense of community, with alumni playing a key role in enhancing authenticity and trustworthiness through personal recommendations.

The theoretical implications of this study expand relational marketing theory by underscoring the need for continuous evaluation and adaptation of strategies. The research highlights that relational marketing in education is an ongoing process that requires regular audits of CRM strategies, digital systems, and engagement programs (Zulyanti et al., 2023). It further emphasizes data-driven personalization, where institutions can segment their markets and tailor experiences to diverse student demographics, as discussed by Yusuf et al. (2024). From a practical perspective, educational institutions are advised to adopt an integrated approach, combining digital tools with human-centered engagement activities. Maintaining open communication, leveraging technology for service personalization, and evaluating the effectiveness of relational marketing strategies are essential for improving student retention and institutional competitiveness. Active alumni engagement and robust database management systems will help institutions adapt to changing market needs, ensuring long-term relationships and a competitive edge in the education sector (Asyiah et al., 2024).

Impact on Loyalty and Quality of service

The findings of this research align closely with the existing literature on relational marketing in educational institutions, particularly regarding the positive impact on student retention and emotional attachment with stakeholders such as parents and alumni (Houston, 2025; Rosário et al., 2025). This study confirms that relational marketing fosters not only student retention but also creates an environment where parents and alumni become active promoters of the institution through word-of-mouth recommendations. This organic promotional effect is consistent with the view that trust-based relationships are foundational to long term loyalty in the educational sector. By building trust and enhancing emotional connections with students and their families, institutions can transform satisfied stakeholders into advocates, which, in turn, helps expand the institution's reach and visibility amidst increasing competition. The research highlights the role of relational marketing in establishing these trust-based relationships, which resonates with the argument

presented by Rosario & Casaca (2025) that loyalty in education goes beyond mere enrollment continuation and extends to broader advocacy.

The study further supports the findings of Wibowo (2023) and Zahra et al., (2024) by demonstrating that digital service innovations, such as online child development reporting and streamlined access to academic information, significantly improve stakeholder satisfaction. The integration of these innovations allows institutions to respond more quickly and effectively to stakeholder needs, thereby enhancing the overall student and parent experience. This study adds to the body of literature by emphasizing how these technological advancements contribute to creating a more responsive and transparent educational environment, which is critical in fostering higher levels of satisfaction and engagement. The use of online platforms for intensive two-way communication, as highlighted in this research, is particularly effective in building a positive institutional image. Stakeholders feel valued when they perceive their opinions are heard and considered, which increases their involvement in school programs and activities. This finding is in line with Lim and Rasul (2022), who argued that interactive communication is a vital component of successful relational marketing strategies.

One of the key contributions of this research is its focus on how relational marketing supports the institution's efforts to maintain service quality through continuous feedback management and adaptive service adjustments. This study aligns with the work of Bilro et al. (2023) and Grewal et al. (2025), who highlighted that feedback from stakeholders is essential for maintaining high-quality educational services. The research found that educational institutions are better able to assess the effectiveness of their services through regular customer satisfaction audits and stakeholder feedback, leading to the continuous improvement of both academic and non-academic programs. The evaluation processes facilitated by relational marketing not only ensure that educational services meet stakeholder expectations but also encourage innovation within the institution, as feedback informs the development of new initiatives and improvements in existing programs. This cyclical feedback loop is essential for ensuring that institutions can adapt to changing needs and remain competitive in an increasingly complex educational landscape.

The theoretical implications of these findings are significant for the development of relational marketing models in education. The research reinforces the importance of building trust based, long-term relationships between educational institutions and their stakeholders, supporting the view that relational marketing is not simply a short-term strategy but a long-term investment in student satisfaction and institutional reputation. The integration of digital innovations and two-way communication into the relational

marketing framework adds a contemporary dimension to existing models, suggesting that technological advancements are now central to maintaining stakeholder loyalty and engagement. Additionally, the study emphasizes the need for institutions to continuously evaluate and adapt their services based on stakeholder feedback, aligning with relationship marketing theory, which emphasizes the importance of dynamic, ongoing engagement and continuous improvement in service delivery.

From a practical standpoint, the study offers actionable recommendations for educational institutions seeking to improve service quality and strengthen stakeholder loyalty. Institutions should focus on leveraging digital innovations, such as online reporting systems and real time access to academic information, to enhance responsiveness and stakeholder satisfaction. Moreover, maintaining open channels of communication, particularly through online platforms, will help build stronger emotional connections with students, parents, and alumni, encouraging their active participation in institutional activities. Institutions should also establish a robust feedback management system to regularly assess the effectiveness of their services and make necessary adjustments. By adopting a holistic relational marketing approach that incorporates both technological innovations and ongoing stakeholder engagement, educational institutions can improve their competitiveness, increase their reputation, and create a sustainable model for maintaining high service quality in the face of evolving educational demands (Grewal et al., 2025; Bilro et al., 2023).

Future Challenges and Prospects

The findings of this research highlight the significant challenges faced by educational institutions in implementing effective relational marketing strategies, particularly in the context of limited human resources and budget constraints. These challenges resonate with the findings of Grewal et al. (2025) and Menidjel et al. (2023), who argue that the lack of skilled personnel in technology and digital marketing, especially in institutions with limited financial resources, can hinder the successful execution of relational marketing strategies. This study supports the notion that as competition among educational institutions intensifies, the demand for innovative marketing strategies increases. However, not all institutions are equally prepared to adapt to technological changes, which results in uneven digital access and readiness. This gap can significantly affect the effectiveness of promotional efforts and overall service delivery to stakeholders, a point echoed in the literature by both Grewal et al. (2025) and Menidjel et al. (2023). The research findings underscore the need for educational institutions to invest in human resources that are adept

in digital marketing and technology to bridge this gap and maintain competitiveness.

Another key challenge identified in the study is the inconsistency in updating digital content and managing valid marketing evaluation data, which is a recurring obstacle for many educational institutions (Bilro et al., 2023; Lim, 2025). The research highlights that many schools and colleges still struggle with providing timely, engaging, and easily accessible information to the public, which limits the effectiveness of their marketing strategies. This finding aligns with the concerns raised by Bilro et al. (2023) and Lim (2025), who argue that the lack of regular content updates and effective marketing evaluation prevents institutions from accurately measuring the success of their strategies and optimizing them for better outcomes. The research emphasizes that without continuous monitoring and evaluation, decision-making processes for improving marketing strategies will remain suboptimal, which in turn hampers the institution's ability to adapt and stay competitive in an ever-evolving educational landscape.

The study highlights the growing importance of adapting marketing strategies to digital trends, such as social media, interactive websites, and visual content, aligning with Assuncao (2024). It emphasizes that educational institutions must embrace these digital marketing trends to increase reach and build personalized engagement with prospective students and parents. Institutions that are responsive to digital changes are more likely to gain public trust and maintain a competitive edge, stressing that adapting to digital platforms is crucial for effective relational marketing in education. Failing to do so risks falling behind in an increasingly digital world where seamless, engaging online interactions are expected. The research also points to promising prospects for relational marketing in education, particularly through the use of digital analytics and data-driven CRM systems to understand stakeholder behavior, as noted by Rosário et al. (2025) and Tjahyadi et al. (2024). These findings underscore that data-driven decision-making will be crucial for refining marketing strategies, enhancing service delivery, and supporting the broader trend of digital transformation in education.

From both a theoretical and practical perspective, the implications of these findings are profound. Theoretically, the research reinforces the importance of relational marketing theory in education, particularly the need for institutions to build long-term, trust-based relationships with stakeholders. The integration of digital tools and data analytics into relational marketing strategies marks an important evolution in the theory, highlighting how technological advancements can enhance personalization and service quality.

Practically, the study provides actionable insights for educational institutions to overcome the challenges of limited resources and technological readiness. Institutions are encouraged to invest in training staff in digital marketing skills, ensure consistent content updates, and utilize digital platforms to engage stakeholders effectively. By doing so, they can not only maintain their competitiveness but also enhance the overall quality of service, loyalty, and public trust, ensuring their long-term success in a rapidly changing educational environment (Rosario et al., 2025; Tjahyadi et al., 2024).

CONCLUSION

This research highlights the vital role of relational marketing in educational institutions, emphasizing the importance of trust, collaboration, and personalized services in building long-term relationships with stakeholders. The study shows that leveraging open communication, digital strategies like CRM systems, and the service marketing triangle significantly enhances stakeholder loyalty and institutional reputation. Continuous evaluation through audits and feedback is crucial for adapting services to changing needs, driving innovation, and ensuring long-term competitiveness. The findings stress that consistent implementation of relational marketing strategies fosters institutional excellence and sustainability in a competitive educational landscape.

While the paper contributes valuable insights into the integration of relational marketing and technology in education, it has limitations, including the reliance on existing literature and a lack of primary fieldwork or in-depth case studies. Future research could focus on exploring the practical challenges of implementing relational marketing strategies across diverse educational settings and investigate the long-term impact on student outcomes and institutional performance. Expanding the research to include case studies and examining the specific barriers to technology adoption would provide a deeper understanding of how to maximize the effectiveness of relational marketing in education.

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