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Decomposing Impression from Attitude in Relationship Management Outcomes

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This study expands relationship management theory by testing the linkages between perceived relational quality, organizational impression, and attitude in affecting the behavioral intention of customer public of five major banks. A survey of 1,178 banking customers showed that perceived relational quality, organizational impression, and individual attitude, significantly affected supportive behaviors. Organizational impression was found to be almost three times more determinant than perceived relational quality in affecting individuals' attitudes, and subsequently, their supportive behaviors. By highlighting the role of organizational impression, linkages between the relationship management perspective and other theoretical frameworks, such as image repair, become apparent; bearing implications for scholarship and practice.

KEYWORDS *attitude, behavioral intention, consumer publics, organizational impression, relationship management*

The scholarship in public relations is replete with studies examining the antecedents and outcomes of organization-public relationship activities through the lens of relationship management theory. It should, however, be noted that the impact of relational management activities (i.e., perceived relational quality) on the publics' cognitive, attitudinal, and behavioral outcomes are never straightforward (Hon, 1998). The present study aims to extend this domain in public relations research by infusing the oft-neglected aspect of perceived organizational impression onto relationship manage-

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ment literature. Specifically, the present study tests whether perceptions of organization-public relationship quality (i.e., control mutuality, satisfaction, trust, and commitment) have the potential to affect perceptual judgments of the organization (i.e., impression of the organization) and in relation to attitudes, influence the behavioral intention of customer publics toward organizations.

Organizations in the banking industry, specifically banks, were selected as the focus of study for several reasons. First, banking is the largest industry sector in the world, with the value of assets among the 1,000 largest banks in the world totaling approximately \$96.4 trillion for the financial year 2008–2009 (International Financial Services London (IFSL) Research: Banking, 2010). However, recent market turmoil has devalued the banking industry, resulting in an astounding 87% decrease in profits from the previous year alone. As a result, banks' reliance on cultivating positive relationships with their publics to retain existing, and gain new, customers (Barnes, 1997) becomes more essential than was previously. Second, although public relations scholars have demonstrated the importance of healthy relationships between banks and their customers, no studies have attempted to investigate empirical evidence regarding the linkages concerning relationship quality outcome, impression, attitude, and behavior. For example, Bruning and Ledingham (2000) investigated three dimensional relationship perceptions—personal, professional, and community relationships—among customers of a local bank. They found that positive relationship perceptions (i.e., personal, professional, and community relationships) significantly impacted customers' satisfaction with the bank. Furthermore, customers who demonstrate a high relational orientation toward banks are more likely to evaluate the bank positively and show loyalty to the bank (Bruning, 2000).

In light of these conditions, this study sets forth to expand relationship management research by testing the linkages between relationship quality perception, perceived organization impression, attitude, and behavioral intention across customers of five major banks in the United States using a single model. The study also compares prediction models between the five banks through path analysis in order to produce a more reliable and generalizable model to account for relationships between different factors that could be applicable for organizations beyond the banking industry. The discussion of findings elaborates on the implications of discerning between organizational impression and attitudes and its importance for public relations scholars as well as practitioners.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Public Relations as Relationship Management

Undoubtedly, a major role of public relations is to “maintain and cultivate mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and its publics”

and that the value of public relations can be accounted for by “measuring the quality of the relationship it establishes with the strategic components of its institutional environment” (L. A. Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2002, p. 539). In this regard, public relations theories such as *Excellence Theory* and *Relationship Management* have demonstrated how building and maintaining positive relationships with publics can yield more tangible outcomes for organizations (L. A. Grunig et al., 2002; Ledingham, 2003). Scholars have also sought to identify and measure relationship dimensions or outcomes to determine the state or characteristics of organization-public relationships (OPRs). A content analysis of relationship management literature revealed twenty different relationship dimensions that have been developed and tested during the last two decades (see Ki & Shin, 2014).

Among the various relationship dimensions and scales used to measure the state and impact of OPRs, that of Hon and Grunig (1999) has demonstrated greater reliability and validity across different organizational contexts (e.g., Hon & Brunner, 2002; Jo, Hon, & Brunner, 2004; Ki & Hon, 2007b; Kim, 2001) and countries (e.g., Huang, 2001; Hung, 2002; Jo, 2006). Huang (2001) study additionally presented how the four dimensions—control mutuality, satisfaction, trust, and commitment—represent a global measure for OPRs. The present study thus finds it useful to utilize these four dimensions to frame its investigation of the impact of bank-customer relational quality. The relationship dimensions are briefly discussed in the following sections.

CONTROL MUTUALITY

This dimension explains the power dynamics in relationships. Defined as “how much each party of the relationship agrees on his or her rightful power to influence each other” (Hon & Grunig, 1999, p. 3), this dimension highlights that power exists in every relationship and that it can be changed and negotiated based on who displays more influence over communication and eventual decisions (e.g., one- or two-way communication in decision-making). This dimension helps determine the optimal power structure for positive relationships between an organization and its publics.

SATISFACTION

This is the most widely investigated relational quality dimension in organization-public relationship (OPR) studies. This dimension measures the degree to which each party involved in a relationship demonstrates favorable feelings toward the other. The reinforcement of one party's positive expectations for the relationship can result in favorable feelings.

TRUST

This dimension addresses the confidence and willingness of both parties to open up to one other (Hon & Grunig, 1999). Three factors underlie this dimension. They are integrity, dependability, and competence. For example, someone who indicates that an organization has integrity believes the organization to be fair and just, and is therefore a trustworthy entity. The public's confidence and perception of organizational reliability are also strong underlying components in the measurement of trust.

COMMITMENT

Commitment is viewed as an essential aspect for the cultivation of successful relationships, especially long-term ones (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). This dimension represents the degree to which each party involved in the relationship believes that it is worth the investment of personal time and effort to maintain and promote the relationship (Hon & Grunig, 1999). An organization's publics can exhibit continuance commitment and affective commitment, both of which, essentially, refer to the lines of action undertaken and maintained by different parties involved, and the emotional orientation or psychological attachment between the different parties, respectively.

Impact of Perceived Relational Quality on Attitudes and Behavioral Intention

Public relations scholars have empirically substantiated the link between relationship quality and its outcomes, including attitudinal and behavioral outcomes. For instance, as relationship is posited to be best measured by examining publics' perceptions (Hon & Grunig, 1999), at least two studies have applied models in hierarchy of effects and persuasion processes (i.e., theory of reasoned action, theory of planned behavior) to evaluate the effects of relationship perception on attitude and behavior (Ki & Hon, 2007a; Seltzer & Zhang, 2011). Identifying perception as an attribute of cognition, Bruning and Ledingham (2000) show how quality perception of the relational efforts displayed by an organization in terms of maintaining personal and community ties, as well as professionalism, with its customers, resulted in more positive attitudes and greater satisfaction. A separate study by the authors revealed how positive attitudes resulting from the perceived quality of the organization-public relationships can also affect behavior through increased customer loyalty toward organizations (Bruning & Ledingham, 2000).

A more comprehensive examination of the impact of relationship management activities implemented by organizations was performed by Ki & Hon (2007a). Utilizing the hierarchy of effects model, Ki & Hon (2007a) tested the

relationship between public perceptions of relational quality maintained by the organization, the consequential attitudes toward the organization, and how these two factors affect behavioral intention toward the organization. Widely used by communication scholars in the fields of advertising, marketing, health, and politics (Chaffee & Roser, 1986; Valente, Paredes, & Poppe, 1998), the model helps explain the sequential steps in which communication effects occur to affect individuals' behavior. Cognitive reaction toward an instance of communicatory act is postulated to first affect perception (Ray, 1973). Individuals' self-reasoning and negotiating of these immediate perceptions with their predisposed beliefs, values, and inherent attitudes will then affect their attitudes toward the message content and communicator involved in the act. Behavior is consequently the predicted outcome of this resultant attitude (Berelson, 1996; Chaffee & Roser, 1986; Severin & Tankard, 2001).

In short, attitude is an outcome of individuals' reasoned perceptions and mediates the impact of these perceptions on their behavior. Furthermore, a causal link connecting attitudes to behavior is the most common directional position postulated in the field of persuasion (Andrews & Kandel, 1979; Kahle, Klingel, & Kulka, 1981). The study by Ki & Hon (2007a) bolstered this postulation by showing that individuals' perceptions of organization-public relational quality affect their attitudes toward the organization. These attitudes then act as precursors to supportive behavioral intention. Specifically, Ki & Hon (2007a) determined that relational perceptions of satisfaction and control mutuality are the strongest predictors of positive attitudes and supportive behaviors (e.g. recommending, affiliating). More recently, Seltzer and Zhang (2011) examined whether publics' positive relationship perceptions of their political parties correlate with favorable attitudes and supportive behaviors toward those parties. They found that healthy relationship perceptions, indeed, yielded more positive attitudes among the publics. However, they did not identify any significant link between the publics' relationship perceptions and behavior.

In brief, the aforementioned studies showed that perceptions precede attitudinal and behavioral outcomes (Perloff, 2010; Severin & Tankard, 2001), where attitude is referred to as "learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner with respect to a given object" (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975, p. 6), and behavioral intention as the intent to perform a particular behavior or a plan to put behavior into effect (Perloff, 2010). In this respect, the following hypotheses are posited:

H1: Individuals demonstrating more favorable perceptions of relational quality with their primary bank will display more supportive behaviors toward the organization.

H2: Individuals' attitudes will influence the relationship between their perception of the relational quality and their supportive behaviors toward the organization; in that

H2a: a stronger attitude will lead to greater supportive behaviors.

The Role of Perceived Organizational Impression

Although the aforementioned discussion has highlighted studies confirming the relationships between individuals' perceptions of organization-public relational quality, attitudes, and consequently, their behavioral intention; the perceptions were largely focused on relational quality. The present study contends that another perceptual aspect exists beyond perceived relational quality which needs to be considered when attempting to link organization's relational management activities to expected behavioral outcomes. This is individuals' perceived impression of the organization. In this instance, individuals' perception of relational quality is expected to affect individuals' impression of the organization apart from affecting their attitudes toward the organization. Therefore, it is necessary to differentiate and examine the relationship between individuals' perceived *impression* of the organization and their perception of the organization-public *relationship quality*; and explore the significance between the outcomes of impression and attitudes on individuals' discerned behavioral intention. The following discussion highlights the intervening role of perceived organizational impression in this process.

The present study adopts the view of organizational impression as the "immediate external perception of an organization" (Sherman, 1999, p. 11). This view differentiates impression from reputation, which can be regarded as an aggregation of an individual's perception of how well organizations are meeting stakeholders' demands and expectations over time (Gotsi & Wilson, 2001). In other words, individuals' perceived impression of an organization is a snapshot view of an organization's reputation at any single point in time. Scholars have shown how corporations possess a strong interest in managing their image and the general impressions they leave with their stakeholders and the general public (Cheney, 1991). From the impression management perspective, the organization determines how it wants to appear to others and prepares for this appearance by actively and meticulously controlling the information they disseminate to their publics (Giacalone & Rosenfeld, 1989). For instance, organizations have been shown to utilize techniques such as emphasizing their traits, abilities, and accomplishments in communicating with their publics to build and bolster positive impressions (Chilcutt, 2009). Organizations have also been found to manage publics' impression by utilizing strategies involving exemplification, ingratiation, and supplication to highlight their competence (Caillouet & Allen, 1996; Connolly-Ahern & Broadway, 2007).

However, it should be noted that the "the public observes independently" when building their impression of the organization (Avenarius, 1993, p. 66), and that direct, and often conspicuous, attempt at impression-building may not be as effective. In other words, the impression perceived by others of an organization may not necessarily be a direct result of the

organization's orchestrated efforts to manage its image, but rather the result of its actions (i.e. relationship management activities), media portrayal, and the shared perception of audiences toward the organization (Barnett, Jermier, & Lafferty, 2006; Botan, 1993; Gioia, Schultz, & Corley, 2000). Scholars have, from the onset, attempted to differentiate the relationships between individuals' impressions and their attitudes and how they affect the organization. Haedrich (1993) argued that while attitude tended to be very positivistic and lie "along a continuum ranging from good to bad," impression, on the other hand, is multidimensional and subjective, relying more on the opinions and perceptions of the individual as opposed to concrete experiences (p. 84). Impression, therefore, lies within the "fuzziness of individual perceptions" (Newsom, Scott, & VanSlyke, 1989, p. 364), and is not easily dealt with by public relations practitioners and scholars (J. E. Grunig, 1993).

Scholars have thus highlighted the significance of paying attention to the importance of perceived organizational impression, as these factors are not only connected to specific behavioral intentions (e.g., consuming a product that provides personal satisfaction) (Haedrich, 1993), but can also be "factors that disturb the relationship between attitudes and actual behavior" (p. 84). Others have shown how perceived organizational impression is crucial in impacting bottom line outcomes such as consumer attitudes and purchase intentions (Knoll & Tankersley, 1991), as well as contributing to an "individual's lasting experience and true understanding of a corporation over time" (Alvesson, 1990, p. 377).

The previously mentioned discussion shows that organizational impression is a potentially important perceptual aspect that is implicit in the impact of perceived relational quality on individual attitudes and, subsequently, their behavioral intentions. The present study, thus, extends relationship management research by testing the linkages between individuals' perception of the organization-public relationship quality, organizational impression, individual attitude, and behavioral intention in a single model (see Figure 1) by testing the following hypotheses:

H3: Individuals' perceived impression of their primary bank will influence the relationship between their perception of the relational quality and their supportive behaviors toward the organization, in that:

H3a: a more positive organizational impression will lead to greater supportive behaviors.

H4: There is a positive relationship between individuals' perceived impression and their attitudes toward the organization.

METHOD

This study was designed to test a model linking relationship quality perception, perceived organizational impression, individual attitudes, and

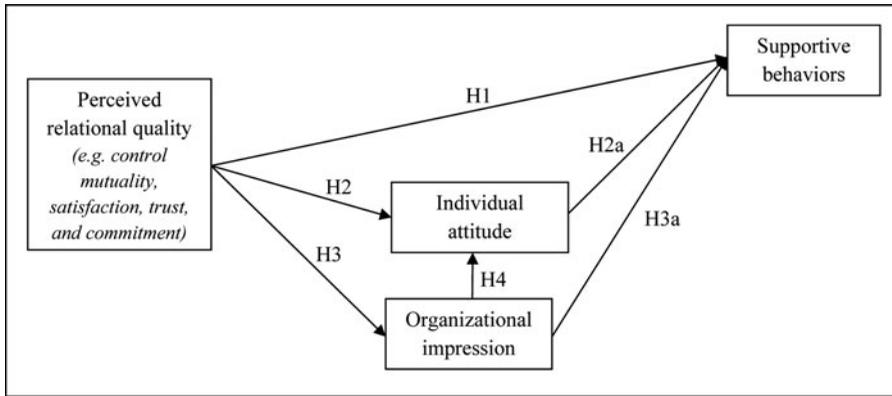


FIGURE 1 Proposed model.

behavioral intention of the customer publics regarding their banks. Five nationwide retail banks ranked on top 10 lists in 2009 were chosen as the organizations examined in the study. Contact information for 8,000 randomly selected bank customers in the United States was purchased from a commercial source. Each respondent received an invitation to fill out an online survey questionnaire. At the beginning of the survey, participants were asked to select their primary bank from the five top nationwide banks. They were then asked to answer questions regarding the quality of their relationship with their bank, their impression of the bank, their attitudes toward the bank, and behavior intentions toward the bank.

Sample

A total of 1,178 customers across the five banks participated in this study. This represents a 14.7% response rate for all banking customers invited to participate in the study. The names of the banks were replaced and identified with the letters A, B, C, D, and E in order to maintain confidentiality. Of the 1,178 participants, 227 were customers of Bank A, 206 of Bank B, 313 of Bank C, 219 of Bank D, and 213 of Bank E,

This study posed demographic questions to determine each participant's gender, age, education level, ethnic/racial identification, and number of years as customer of the bank. Slightly more than half of respondents were males (54%). The mean age was 43, and ranged from 19 to 83 years of age. Participants' educational level was broken down as follows: some schooling (1%), high school diploma (10%), some college (34%), college degree (26%), some graduate school (5%), graduate degree (18%), and doctoral degree (4%). The sample constituted of 61% Caucasian, 15% African American, 13% Hispanic/Latino, 8% Asian, and approximately 2% indicated as "other" in their ethnicity (e.g., multiracial, Anglo). The average number of years partici-

pants had been customers of their primary bank was 11, with a range from a period of three months to 52 years. The length of time indicated by respondents is significant as it could indicate their ability to provide meaningful answers to questions regarding their relationships with their banks.

Measures

Relationship Quality Perceptions

Hon and Grunig (1999) guidelines for selecting the relationship quality perception items were utilized for this study. For each of the four relationship variables—control mutuality, satisfaction, trust, and commitment—a 9-point Likert-type scale was used (1 = strongly disagree to 9 = strongly agree). A total of 30 items was used to measure relationship quality perceptions (8 items each for control mutuality, satisfaction and trust, and 7 items for commitment). Cronbach's alphas for the variables were .90, .91, .91, and .91, respectively. Composite scores for each of the four relationship dimensions were used for subsequent analysis.

INDIVIDUAL ATTITUDE

This is defined as the “psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor” (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993), and is measured in this study as consumers' evaluation of their primary bank's usefulness and favorability. Participants were asked to rate their agreement in response to two attitude measurement items based on the nine-point scale. Examples of measurement statements included “The [Name of the bank] is useful to me” and “I like being a customer of [Name of the bank].”

PERCEIVED ORGANIZATIONAL IMPRESSION

This variable is operationalized as an individual's “immediate external perception of an organization” (Sherman, 1999, p. 11), which, for the purpose of this study, refers to how banking customers view their primary banks. Respondents rated their agreement on a 9-point scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree, in response to two attitude measurement items; “I have a favorable impression of [Name of bank], and My impression of [Name of bank] is negative (reverse coded).”

BEHAVIORAL INTENTION

This study adopted a three-item scale from Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman (1996) to measure publics' behavioral intentions toward the banks. The original scale was modified for the purpose of the current research. As with other variables, a 9-point scale to measure behavioral intentions toward the bank was used, and the three items were then composited for use in further analysis.

Statistical Analysis

To test the proposed six hypotheses, the present study performed two analyses, regression and path analysis. Even though the regression analysis offers reasonably understandable outcomes in testing the proposed hypotheses, this study also included path analysis to account for multicollinearity. Path analysis is a practical technique that provides a remedy for multicollinearity issues, as it allows for interdependent relationships among independent variables. Path analysis, thus, utilizes simple bivariate correlations by specifying the relationships in a series of regression-like equations that can then be estimated by simultaneously determining the level of correlation attributable to each effect in each equation (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1998).

RESULTS

The present study used composite scores extracted from factor analysis for the latent variables with multiple items in order to make the model more parsimonious and to achieve convergence. Factor scores were used for the four variables—perceived relationship quality, individual attitude, organizational impression and supportive behaviors—treating the four constructs as observed variables.

Correlation Analysis

This study used listwise deletion for missing variables and a total of 1159 responses were analyzed. Prior to performing the regression analysis, a correlation analysis was examined. As shown in Table 1 all of the variables are significantly associated with each other. Furthermore, all of the directions include the same signs, as predicted by the hypotheses.

Regression Analysis

As depicted in Table 2, the two regression analyses for individual attitude and supportive behavior as dependent variables revealed significant results.

TABLE 1 Correlation matrix

	1	2	3	4
1. Perceived relationship quality	—			
2. Organizational impression	.835**	—		
3. Attitude	.808**	.879**	—	
4. Supportive behavior	.869**	.792**	.774**	—

** $p < .001$.

First, organizational impression ($\beta = .68$) (H4) is most strongly associated with attitude, followed by perceived relational quality ($\beta = .24$) (H3). Second, perceived relational quality ($\beta = .87$) (H1) is the strongest predictor of supportive behavior, followed by individual attitude ($\beta = .21$) (H2a) and organizational impression ($\beta = .13$) (H3a). Additionally, the total variances accounted for in the two regression models were consistent and strong, with adjusted R^2 ranging between .77 and .79. In summary, perceived relational quality, individual attitude, and organizational impression significantly affected supportive behavior, with, perceived relational quality and organizational impression being significant predictors of attitude. All the proposed hypotheses were thus strongly supported.

Path Analysis

Figure 2 provides the results of the statistical tests for the individual paths, including magnitude and significance of the coefficients for the model. In general, the outcome of the path analysis is consistent with the regression analysis. Perceived relational quality strongly and significantly affected organizational impression ($\beta = .84$, $p < .001$) (H3). Perceived relational quality and organizational impression are also important predictors of attitude; however, the effect levels are different. The effect level of organizational impression on individual attitude ($\beta = .68$, $p < .001$) (H4) is 2.8 times greater

TABLE 2 Results of stepwise regression analysis

Independent Variables	Dependent Variables	
	Attitude	Behavior
Perceived relationship quality	.24(2)	.87(1)
Organizational impression	.68(1)	.13(3)
Individual attitude	—	.21(2)
F	2192.617***	1312.515***
R2	.79	.77
Adjusted R2	.79	.77

Note. Numbers outside parentheses indicate standardized β . Numbers in parentheses refer to order of inclusion in step-wise regression equation. *** $p < .001$.

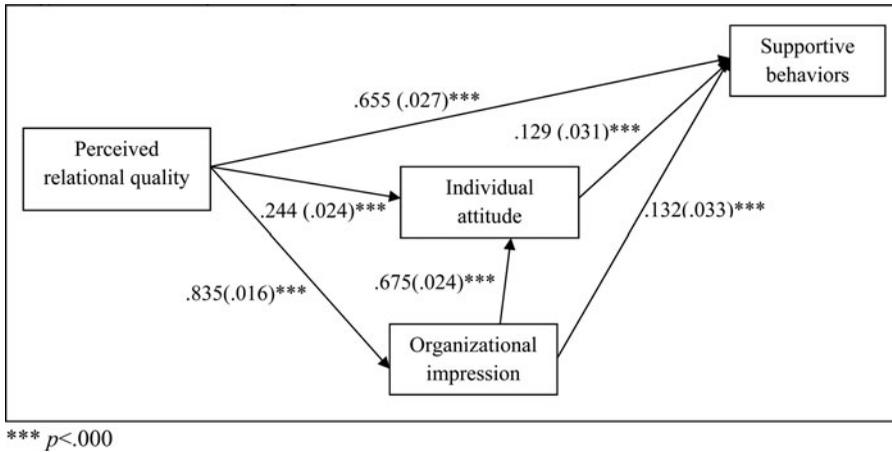


FIGURE 2 Results of path analysis.

than that of perceived relational quality ($\beta = .24, p < .001$) (H2). Perceived relational quality, individual attitude, and organizational impression significantly also affected supportive behavior, even though the effect levels are quite different. The effect level of perceived relational quality on supportive behavior ($\beta = .66, p < .001$) (H1) is 4.77 times greater than that of individual attitude (H2a) and that of organizational impression (H3a) ($\beta = .13, p < .001$ for each). Therefore, all of the proposed hypotheses are supported. As the tested model is a “just identified model,” which has an equal number of equations and unknowns, the goodness-of-fit indices cannot be calculated.

DISCUSSION

This study provides empirical evidence extending existing knowledge on relationship management in public relations scholarship. It supplements findings from prior studies confirming that efforts in relationship management are significant in affecting bottom-line outcomes (i.e., behavioral intention of publics) (e.g., Ki & Hon, 2007a; Seltzer & Zhang, 2011). These findings reiterate the importance of the relationship management imperative of public relations counsel in organizations (L. A. Grunig et al., 2002), and supports prior findings on the effectiveness of healthy relational quality in producing customer loyalty in the banking industry (Bruning, 2000)

This study has also shown how the relationship between individuals' perceived quality of an organization's relationship management efforts on their behavioral intention (i.e., supportive intent) is not direct. Apart from bolstering findings of prior studies that showed the indirect role of individual attitude from healthy perceptions of organization-public relational quality

on individuals' behavioral intention (e.g., Bruning & Ledingham, 2000; Ki & Hon, 2007a), the present study further uncovered the role of perceived organizational impression in "disturbing the relationship between attitudes and actual behavior" (Haedrich, 1993, p. 84). Specifically, and more significantly, findings revealed perceptions of organization-public relational quality posing a stronger relationship with organizational impression than individual attitude. Additionally, the findings also showed organizational impression being almost three times more determinant of individual attitude than perceptions of the relationship quality.

Collectively, these findings point toward the importance of organizational impression as an essential link toward understanding the processes involved in maximizing the potential of relationship management efforts to produce bottom-line outcomes (i.e., supportive behavior from publics). However, apart from studies on organizational impression, which were primarily focused on the importance of managing impression during organizational crises (e.g., Caillouet & Allen, 1996; Lee, 2005) and in differentiating it with concepts such as organizational image and reputation (e.g., Haedrich, 1993), the current state of public relations research has shown much neglect in terms of examining the impact of individual impression on organizational outcomes (Sallot, Lyon, Acosta-Alzuru, & Jones, 2003). This is unfortunate considering that organizational CEOs and managers widely regard the management of organizational image and impression as a key function of public relations (Hon, 1998). Future studies should thus look to bridge this gap in public relations research.

By providing evidence of the significance of organizational impression in relationship management outcomes in this study, it is hoped that future studies will also pay closer attention to organizational impression as outcomes of public relations activities, or recognize it as an important facet of the organization that needs to be managed. As pointed out by scholars, organizational impression and image are crucial factors in determining legitimacy and reputation (Gilpin, 2010; King & Whetten, 2008). Understanding them is thus "fundamental to the research, teaching, and practice of public relations" (Moffitt, 1994, p. 41).

Distilling the role of organizational impression impacting behavioral intention through the relationship management perspective has also enabled the present study to highlight linkages between different theoretical perspectives in public relations; particularly those which implicitly emphasize the importance of organizational impression. For instance, central in the image repair perspective for crisis management (Benoit, 1995) are post-crises communication strategies aimed at affecting the public's impression of an organization and its actions in order to protect its reputation. The present study has not only shown the importance of the public's impression of an organization in impacting attitudes and subsequent behavior towards the

organization, these impressions were also shown to be related to the quality of the relationships fostered by the organization with its publics. This suggests that managing organizational impression as an ongoing process in public relations efforts (i.e., relationship management) should be effective in aiding post-crises efforts concerning organizational impression (i.e., image repair). Future studies may examine this possibility and show whether sustained relationship management efforts and the perceived relational quality arising from these efforts can aid image repair strategies in mitigating the negative effects of crises on the organization.

By highlighting the role of perceived organizational impression, the present study was also able to draw linkages between the relationship management perspective and impression management strategies in the public relations literature. Embedded in strategies for managing organization-public relationships are strategies that have been posited by scholars to enhance individuals' impressions of the organization. For example, organizational impression imbued in individuals tends to be the "outcome of any dialogue" (Avenarius, 1993, p. 69). The publics must be able to observe the process of organizations taking the assessment of people into account and reacting according to feedback received. In other words, people must be able to experience a certain level of *control mutuality* where they perceive some ability to influence the actions of the organization and the construction of its image (Botan, 1993), and feel *satisfaction* when these 'powers' are deemed to be exercised. Similarly, fostering control mutuality and satisfaction are two important relationship management strategies (Hon & Grunig, 1999). Therefore, the commonality of strategies such as "control mutuality" and promoting "satisfaction" are sieved from the demonstration of the linkages, signaling their importance as public relations strategies that should receive greater attention from scholars and practitioners.

An important practical implication obtained by the findings in this study is that organizations should strive to nurture and maintain relationships with their publics. Apart from placing greater attention on the relationship management strategies highlighted above (e.g., control mutuality and satisfaction), and beyond those that have been widely espoused by prior studies (e.g., trust, commitment, involvement, openness) (Hon & Grunig, 1999; Ledingham & Bruning, 1998), the present study proposes the importance of carrying out relationship management efforts with the aim of enhancing organizational impression. One way to do this is to make relationship management efforts more visible in the public eye. In other words, the relational quality that an organization is perceived to be fostering should not necessarily be a direct result of one's direct experience with the organization, but should also be due to what one sees is being experienced by others. One way to achieve this is for organizations to leverage social networking platforms, where online networks are becoming important sources of influence in building organizational perceptions (Kelleher, 2007).

Limitations

The present study had examined linkages between various factors from the perspective of banking customers and provided crucial insights regarding the importance and processes in translating relationship quality to supportive behaviors in the retail banking industry. This is beneficial, recognizing that cultivating positive relationships with their publics in order to retain existing, and gain new, customers is increasingly crucial to a banking industry still recovering from the market turmoil of 2009–2010. This focus, however, may possibly limit the generalizability of the findings to organization-public relationships involving customer publics involved in exchange relationships with the organizations (c.f. personal and communal relationships) (e.g., Bruning & Ledingham, 2000). The findings were also based on incumbent customers. Future studies can extend investigation to different publics, such as those who had no prior relationships with the organization, and show whether the findings hold in predicting the behavioral intention of the more uninitiated target publics.

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