Strategic Relationship Marketing Stratagems: An Impeccable Constituent for Sustainable Retention

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Abstract

The purpose is to explain to university management in Ghana how to use strategic relationship marketing stratagems (SRMS) to attain sustainable retention which is viewed from a sustained competitive arena. A hypothetical model ("Susten Model") is provided to serve as a guide (which is yet to be subjected to intellectual scrutiny). A cross-sectional survey was used with the help of a structured questionnaire. Data was collected from 500 respondents (senior members- both staff and non-teaching staff) and were examined through SmartPLS 3 and SPSS. The former was used to analyse the structural relationship of the variables while the latter was equally used for the descriptive analysis. The finding publicized that within the context of Ghana, universities can attain sustainable retention through the use of strategic relationship marketing stratagems if these stratagems are treasured as a strategic marketing resource. The phenomenon deserves further research because data were collected from some selected universities in these cities (Accra, Kumasi, and Cape Coast) in Ghana. Future research can expand on the database for empirical legitimacy. For retention sustainability, the SRMS advocates that management should have a *conflict resolution* chamber to resolve students' protests promptly, deliver *first-class educational services* and institute an *effective and efficient educational communication system*. These stratagems are competitively enhanced when management is well *trusted, accessible, students are made to feel part of university management and* finally*, the conflict resolution mechanism is made to be swift.* It underpins and advances the frame of information concerning relationship marketing by introducing this new concept "strategic relationship marketing."

Keywords: "susten model", strategic relationship marketing stratagems, strategic marketing resource, sustainable retention, Ghana

1. Introduction

Sustainable retention is now an issue with most Ghanaian universities (Wonnia, 2021). Different approaches can be used to attain this height but this paper seeks to use SRMS in achieving that. Despite the availability of academic facilities and state-of-the-art paraphernalia, the problem remains unexplained (Sherry, 2021). While some are attracting students, (Ahakwa et al., 2021) other universities are finding it very difficult to retain the hard-won customers (students) with their services. (Kyereko et al., 2021). Thus, retention sustainability continues to be an ultimate headache for many universities in Ghana (Baah et al., 2021). Scholars from the marketing arena have suggested that consciously building relationships with students with a strategic intent could deal with the issue (Affran et al., 2021). From this perspective, researchers are of the view that with careful planning, relationship marketing as a management function within the university fraternity can serve as *strategic marketing resources* for retention sustainability. The next question is how can this be done (Affran et al., 2021). Notwithstanding all the volume of work done in the field of relationship marketing (Sukaatmadja et al., 2021). literature is still silent on the scholarly contributions of relationship marketing on strategic thinking, particularly in the tertiary education context. Scholars are now advocating for more scholarly works in the field of relationship marketing specifically from the strategic arena (Obaze et al., 2021). Thus, the main urge for conducting this research is to explain to university management in Ghana how to use strategic relationship

marketing stratagems (SRMS) to attain retention sustainability. A hypothetical model ("Susten Model") is provided to serve as a guide (which is yet to be subjected to intellectual scrutiny). Objectively, this study is to examine the indirect impact of student retention schemes on the relationship between strategic relationship marketing stratagems and strategic marketing resources. The study is also guided by this question: How do student retention schemes mediate the relationship between strategic relationship marketing stratagems and strategic marketing resources. An empirical conclusion was drawn for practitioners and academics for consideration. This work highlights how to achieve sustainable retention using SRMS. It has also widened the conversation on relationship marketing as the concept of "strategic relationship marketing and strategic marketing resource" is introduced.

1.1 Literature Review

1.1.1 Theoretical Background and Hypothesis Development

1.1.2 Strategic Marketing Resources and the Resource-Based Theory

The concept of "strategic marketing resources" newly introduced in this study is viewed as a bundle of resources that the marketer can effectively deploy to attain sustainable retention.   The rationale behind this concept is viewed from the point that "strategic relationship marketing stratagems" could be used to attain a long-term strategic objective especially when the buildup is seen as a marketing resource. Underpinned by the resource-based theory, "strategic marketing resources" in this context are viewed as intangible resources that could be used to achieve sustainable retention, theorizing from sustained competitive advantage. Theoretically, it is premised on the assumption that the university's strategic marketing resources emanating from the "strategic relationship marketing stratagems" must have these distinct attributes (rareness, valuable, inimitable and non-substitutability) before it could qualify as a resource for retention sustainability. The theory further reiterated that; the attributes of these resources are empirical indicators for accessing the university's "retention sustainability." Respectively they are discussed below; *Valuable*: In his opinion, Chadwick et al. (2021) confirm that such resources are valuable and should have the capacity to be used to generate "retention sustainability." Meaning they should empower the university to maximize its prospects and minimize its coercions in their environment. *Rareness*: The resource-based model, (Kant, 2021) again, suggests that rareness is another characteristic; the resources are difficult to come by and must possess what is to "generate a sustained retention." That is, the "resources" should be unique and inaccessible to competitors within the education spectrum. *Inimitability*: competitors within the educational field should find it extremely difficult to copy such a resource. It can be similar and not the same. The inimitability of the resource should be based on "one or a combination" of these details; "Unique historical condition, Causal ambiguity, and Social complexity." *Non-substitutability*: it should not have any substitute within the confines of its competitors. The inability to imitate the resource should not compel its competitors to create a similar resource at any point in time. It should be made difficult for substitution to be carried out by its competing institution. As (Kryscynski et al., 2021) put it "a firm seeking to duplicate the sustained retention strategy of another firm by imitating the other firm's high-quality top management team will often be unable to copy the team exactly." This framework has been used to evaluate the other scholarly works where they argued that those resources, they have identified are sources of sustained competitive advantage. Thus, the same can be applied to this study where sustained retention could equally lead to sustained competitive advantage.   In this light, sustained competitive advantage is of much importance in the concept of strategic relationship marketing because of its imperativeness to the long-term accomplishment of the organization.

1.1.3 The Integration of Sustained Competitive Advantage, Strategic Relationship Marketing Stratagems, and Strategic Marketing Resources

As stated earlier, the concept of strategic marketing resources is viewed from the sustainable competitive arena (in this context sustainable retention). Thus, the issue regarding sustained competitive advantage is worth discussing. Barney operationalized the definition of "sustained competitive advantage" where he stated that "a firm is said to have a sustained competitive advantage when it is implementing a value-creating strategy not simultaneously being implemented by any current or potential competitor and when these other firms are unable to duplicate the benefits of this strategy." The study adopts the logic articulated by Barney (1991) and further states that strategic marketing resource is not contextualized "upon the period of calendar time during which the university enjoys a competitive advantage as suggested by some scholars" (Jacobsen, 1988; Porter, 1980). "Rather, this kind of sustained competitive advantage (retention sustainability) depends upon the possibility of the competing university duplicating the benefits of the strategy in question." This argument was scholarly supported by Kant (2021) when they concluded "that competitive advantage is sustained only if it continues to

exist after efforts to duplicate that advantage have ceased." Finally, the term "competitive advantage sustained" makes no suggestion that is everlasting instead, it means it will diminish through the photocopying of the efforts of other universities. Research has it that to attain a sustainable competitive advantage the marketer must possess superior skills or resources. Meaning the strategic marketing resource emanating from the strategic relationship marketing stratagems should possess these qualities mentioned earlier. In another setting, these strategic marketing resources could include "all assets, capabilities, organizational processes, university's attributes, information, and knowledge," Ehrlich et al. (2021) branded them as "physical capital resources" and Ahmed et al. (2021) characterized them into "human capital resources.") Eckardt et al. (2021) pointed to them as "organizational capital resource." Physical capital resources include the physical technology used in teaching and learning in the universities and their geographic location. "The human capital resource includes the training, experience, judgment, intelligence, relationship, and the insight of various faculty members." "The organizational capital resource includes the university's formal reporting structure. It is formal and informal planning, controlling the university's coordinating systems as well as the informal relations among groups within the university and between those in its environment." In conclusion, I would like to state that strategic marketing resource must have these qualities if it is intended for sustainable retention (sustained competitive advantage). Beneath is the proposed research model ("susten model") based on the reviewed literature with its hypothetical structure.
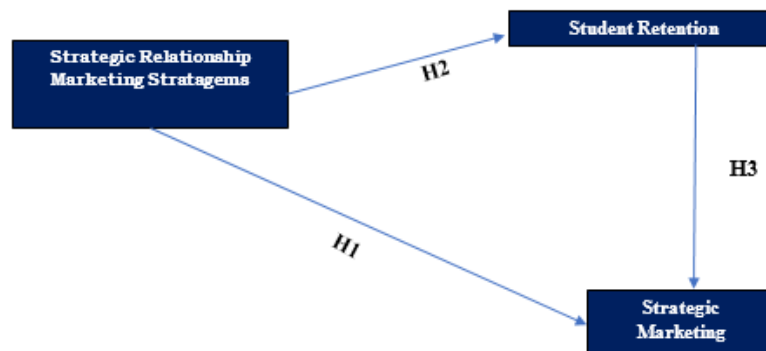

Figure 1. The proposed research model ("susten model") is a model that explains how institutions could attain retention sustainability using SRMS

The "susten Model" is founded on the supposition that institutional retention sustainability is constructed on a formidable strategic marketing resource and further enhanced by a dependable retention scheme.

H1: SRMS has a direct positive impact on strategic marketing resources.

H2: SRMS has a direct positive impact on the Student retention scheme

H3: Student retention schemes have an indirect positive impact on the relationship between strategic relationship marketing stratagems and strategic marketing resources.

2. Research method

2.1 Sample Strategy and Process

The target population was all senior members (*staff and non-staff*) located in some selected universities in these three cities (Accra, Kumasi & Cape coast) in Ghana. For the qualitative phase of the research, the researcher identified the participants of the four focus groups discussions by employing non-probability judgmental sampling. Judgmental sampling permits the researcher to use his/her know-how or judgment in picking the elements to be included in the focus groups (Tikkanen et al., 2019). To identify respondents for the quantitative stage in the study, a multi-stage sampling procedure was followed. The first stage of the sampling process involves the selection of the sampling frame, namely five universities by using non-probability judgmental sampling, where the researcher used his expertise or judgment to determine which specific university form part of the sample. A list of universities from the Ghana University Association (GUA) was used as a sample frame. From this list, the researcher selected five. The second stage of sampling involves the selection of the sampling units (senior members) from respective universities. Within the sampling frame (universities) identified during

the first stage of the sampling process. The non-probability sampling technique, quota sampling, was used to select five hundred respondents (100 for each university), based on convenience, and to fill quotas in each institution. This technique is suitable since it pledges the representativity of the target population (Panwar et al., 2018). Table 1 shows an explanation of the sampling process to be followed in the research.

Table 1. The sampling process of the study

Phase	Stage	Sampling method(s)	Sampling frame	Sampling unit
Qualitative (Focus group)	1	Judgmental	Universities (Five universities, from three cities in Ghana.)	20 Senior members (4 per focus group)
Quantitative (Survey design)	2	Judgmental & Quota sampling (based on convenience)	Universities (Five universities, from three cities in Ghana.)	500 was selected in these universities (100 per university) based on convenience

Respondents were approached during working hours on different days of the week until the quota is gotten. The unit was identified based on some screening questions. The intention is to ascertain whether those respondents are senior members of the university in question, and secondly to assist with filling the quotas.

Table 2. Explains the sampling plan

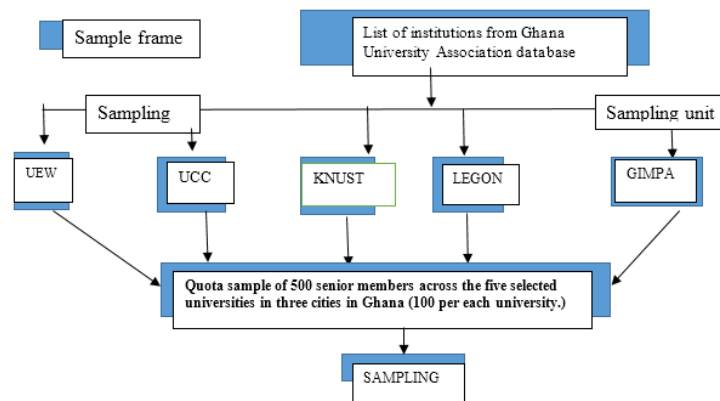|	Sampling
Target Population	Senior members in all the universities in Ghana.
Sampling Units	Five Universities in these three cities in Ghana.
Sampling Elements	Senior members in these five Universities in these three cities in Ghana.
Sample Frame	Ghana Association of Universities database.
Sampling Size	500 respondents were selected in these three cities in Ghana (100 per each university)

Figure 2. Illustration of the sampling process

2.2 Data Collection Method

A multiple-method data collection technique was used involving two phases.   First, focus groups and second: cross-sectional surveys were used to collect the data. For the focus group, the researcher acted as a facilitator and made use of the moderator's plan to arouse responses and discussions from the participants. Discussions were centered on themes relating to strategic relationship marketing stratagems and student retention. The various constructs generated from the focus group were added to existing scales which were adopted from various scholars within my field of study. They were also modified to solicit information from the respondents. A cross-sectional survey was additionally developed to mop up all the necessary information from the target

market. The close-ended questionnaire was used as a measuring instrument to pick demographic and psychographic information of respondents and a Likert scale was used to quantitatively measure the underlying constructs to unearthed the research objectives. The instrument was pretested first among the target population and before the final usage. (Panwar et al., 2018).

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Descriptive Analysis

Data were taken from five public universities in Ghana. It can be observed from table 3 that an equal number of respondents (about 19%) were invited from Legon, UCC, and UEW, respectively, to participate in the study. Similarly, 20.3% of the respondents were invited from KNUST and GIMPA, respectively, to participate in the study. Though there were more respondents from the latter than the former, the choice of sample size for the study was derived based on stratified random sampling. It thus suffices to conclude that the five universities were equally represented in the study.

Table 3. Response of the universities

University	Frequency	Percent
Legon	97	19.7
UCC	98	19.9
KNUST	100	20.3
GIMPA	100	20.3
UEW	98	19.9
Total	493	100.0

Source. Field data, 2022.

3.2 Demographic Information

The results in table 4 in the collective characteristics of the respondents across the five universities. It can be observed that 61.1% of the respondents were males. In addition, most of the respondents were between the ages of 41 and 50 years compared to 38.7% between 30 and 40 years. Only 2% of the respondents were between 61 years and 70 years. When asked to indicate their employment status, most respondents (58%) said they were senior lecturers. About 12.4% said they were lecturers compared to about 9.9% who are Administrative staff. Generally, about 66.5% said they were not involved in any administrative duties compared to 33.5% who said they were involved in administrative duties.

Table 4. Characteristics of respondents

Category	Characteristics	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	301	61.1
	Female	192	38.9
Age	30-40	191	38.7
	41-50	241	48.9
	51-60	51	10.3
	61-70	10	2.0
Employment Status	Administrative staff	49	9.9
	Assistant Lecturer	39	7.9
	Lecturer	61	12.4
	Senior lecturer	286	58.0
	Associate Professor	53	10.8
	Full Professor	5	1.0
Number of years working in the University	1-10	176	35.7
	10-20	240	48.7
	20-30	77	15.6
Are You Involved in Administrative Duties	Yes	165	33.5
	No	328	66.5

Source. Field data, 2022.

The distribution of courses assigned to the lecturers of the five public universities approached normality (skewness = 0.00). However, it implies that each lecturer was assigned three courses per semester on the average (standard deviation = 0.89198). The smaller size of the standard deviation values relative to the average course assigned to the lecturers means that very close to three courses were assigned to the lecturers in each of the five public universities. Therefore, the minimum number of assigned courses was one, and the maximum number of assigned courses was five.

3.3 Response to SRMS, SRMO AND SMR

The respondents were asked to indicate their opinion on three categories of questions, strategic relationship marketing stratagems (SRMS), strategic relationship marketing outcome (SRMO), and strategic marketing resources (SMR). The SRMS consists of questions on seven subcategories: trust, commitment, communication, conflict handling, competence, bonding, and service excellence. The SRMO is on customer (student) retention. In contrast, the SMR consists of questions that seek to link with strategic relationship stratagems. In addition, the respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. It can be observed from table 5 that the respondents of the five public universities indicated their opinion on each question. Though most of the responses were strongly agreed across the various questions, the total response shows that regarding strategic relationship stratagem, 56.8% of the respondents strongly agreed to the questions on the seven subcategories while 36.9% agreed. Also, about 4.6% were neutral, and 1.6% disagreed, compared to 0.1% who strongly disagreed. Details of specific responses to the seven subcategories are shown in table 5. It can be further observed that concerning strategic relationship marketing outcome, close to 64.9% of the respondents strongly agreed 25.1% agreed, 2.5 % were neutral and 0.5% disagreed with item construction defining customer retention. Finally, about 61.5% strongly agreed to the questions regarding strategic marketing resources compared to 34.1% who only agreed. Similarly, only 2.9% were neutral on the questions on strategic marketing resources, whilst 1.4% disagreed. Only 0.1% strongly disagreed with the questions. In general, it is observed from the responses that most respondents in the five universities strongly agreed to the question on strategic relationship marketing outcomes compared to the strategic relationship marketing stratagem, which had the highest agreed responses. Also, more respondents were neutral on the strategic relationship marketing stratagem than the other three main categories. However, strategic marketing resources and strategic relationship marketing stratagem had similar respondents who strongly disagreed.

Table 5. Response to SRMS, SRMO and SMR

Main category	subcategory	Response	Responses N	Percent	Total Responses N	Percent
Strategic Relationship Marketing Stratagems	Trust	Strongly Agree	1834	62.0%	9502	56.8%
		Agree	967	32.7%	6173	36.9%
		Neutral	109	3.7%	769	4.6%
		Disagree	45	1.5%	271	1.6%
		Strongly Disagree	1	0.0%	13	0.1%
	Commitment	Strongly Agree	942	47.8%		
		Agree	873	44.3%		
		Neutral	110	5.6%		
		Disagree	43	2.2%		
		Strongly Disagree	4	0.2%		
	Communication	Strongly Agree	1056	53.6%		
		Agree	776	39.4%		
		Neutral	115	5.8%		
		Disagree	22	1.1%		
		Strongly Disagree	2	0.1%		
	Conflict Handling	Strongly Agree	1217	61.9%		
		Agree	650	33.1%		
		Neutral	66	3.4%		

		Disagree	30	1.5%		
		Strongly Disagree	2	0.1%		
	Competence	Strongly Agree	1700	57.7%		
		Agree	1067	36.2%		
		Neutral	136	4.6%		
		Disagree	42	1.4%		
		Strongly Disagree	1	0.0%		
	Bonding	Strongly Agree	1020	52.0%		
		Agree	750	38.2%		
		Neutral	128	6.5%		
		Disagree	61	3.1%		
		Strongly Disagree	2	0.1%		
	Service Excellence	Strongly Agree	1733	58.6%		
		Agree	1090	36.9%		
		Neutral	105	3.6%		
		Disagree	28	0.9%		
		Strongly Disagree	1	0.0%		
Strategic Relationship Marketing Outcome						
	Customer Retention	Strongly Agree	1903	64.9%		
		Agree	942	32.1%		
		Neutral	72	2.5%		
		Disagree	15	0.5%		
Strategic Marketing Resources	SMR Stratagems	Strongly Agree	1769	60.6%	2093	61.5%
		Agree	1011	34.6%	1160	34.1%
		Neutral	87	3.0%	99	2.9%
		Disagree	46	1.6%	47	1.4%
		Strongly Disagree	5	0.2%	5	0.1%

Source. Field data, 2022.

3.4 Analysis Data

It can be noticed from figure one that changes in strategic relationship marketing stratagems and student retention cause a 34.3% modification in strategic marketing resources. Further, a unit change in strategic relationship marketing stratagem will result in a 1.7% change in strategic marketing resources. However, student retention has a strong mediating relationship between strategic relationship marketing stratagem and strategic marketing resources. It can be observed that about 7% of the changes in student retention were caused by variations in strategic relationship marketing stratagem. Also, a unit change in between strategic relationship marketing stratagem will cause a 26.4% change in strategic marketing resources. On the other hand, a unit change in student relations causes a 58.1% change in strategic marketing resources. For a proper evaluation of the mediating role of student relations, the linear regression model will be used $Y = a + B_1X_1 + B_2X_2$ Equation 1: Linear Regression Equation. Where Y in the endogenous construct, a is the regression constant, B are the exogenous constructs and X is the coefficients of the exogenous constructs. By substituting the variables into *equation 1:* SMR = 0.343 - 0.017 (SRMS) + 0.581 (SR).

Equation 2: Model SR = 0.070 + 0.264 (SRMS)

Equation 3: Model 2 By substituting model 2 into model 1 SMR = 0.343 - 0.017 (SRMS) + 0.581 (0.070 + 0.264 (SRMS) SMR = 0.343 - 0.017 (SRMS) + 0.04067+ 0.153384 (SRMS) *SMR = 0.384 + 0.136 (SRMS)*

Equation 4 (Miladinović,2021)*.* The result of equation 4 is an indication of the effect of the mediating role of student retention on the link between strategic relationship stratagems and strategic marketing resources shown in equation 1. It can be observed that if there are no changes in the strategic resource marketing stratagems of the universities, their strategic marketing resources will increase by 0.384 or 38.4%. However, a unit change in their

strategic resource marketing stratagems will result in a 13.6% change in their strategic marketing resources. It implies that the mediating role of the student retention schemes improves the relationship between strategic marketing stratagems and strategic marketing resources from -0.017 to 0.136.
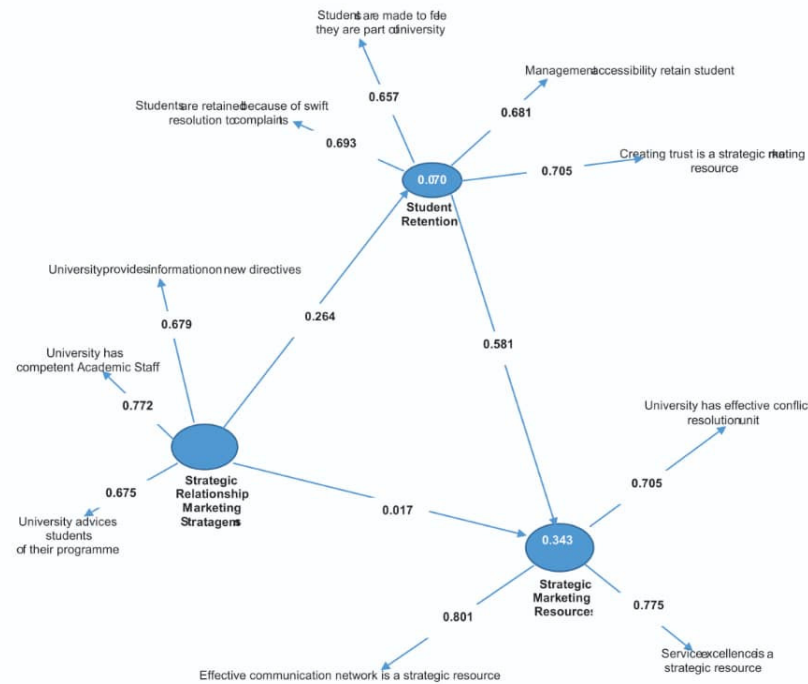

Figure 3. The "susten model" as depicted by the outcome which accurately upholds the projected model

3.5 The Quality Criteria of the "Susten Model"

The results in table 1 show the specific variable of the model in figure 1 that reliably explains each construct and how the constructs relate with each other to form a valid model. From the table, the Cronbach's Alpha values indicate the reliability of the constructs. It can be observed that all the constructs met the minimum threshold of 0.65 or 65%. Therefore, the entire indicator variables reliably explained their respective constructs. On the other hand, the Composite Reliability values in table 1 give more accurate reliability of the model as such it is the preferred indicator of the model's validity. Since all the values are above 0.7, it suffices to conclude that the model is reliable and valid. Since the rho_A values are all less than 1, it implies that the indicators contributed significantly to explaining their respective constructs. Also, since the AVE values are greater than 0.5, means that for each of the three constructs, the factors correlate positively with each other in the construct. Therefore, the respective three indicator variables of strategic relationship marketing stratagem, the four indicator variables of student retention, and the three indicator variables of strategic marketing resources do not linearly predict each other.

Table 6. Reliability and validity of the model

Constructs	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Student Retention	0.626	0.626	0.779	0.468
Strategic Marketing Resources	0.644	0.659	0.805	0.580
Strategic Relationship Marketing Stratagem	0.610	0.518	0.753	0.504

3.6 Discriminant Validity

This is a confirmatory analysis of the nature of the relationship between the construct in the model in figure 1. The aim is to ensure that constructs that are not supposed to relate remain unrelated. It can be observed from

table 2 that the constructs that are not supposed to be related to each other have null values. This confirms the values AVE and composite reliability in table 1 which shows that the indicator variables of the constructs do not linearly predict each other and its construct had high reliability. Also, the f-square values indicate that student retention is very important in explaining strategic marketing resources. Finally, the HTMT being less than 0.9 indicates there is a true correlation between student retention, strategic marketing resources, and Strategic Relationship Marketing Stratagems. In conclusion, the three constructs are unrelated hence the model is good for policymaking and resources allocation in the university fraternity.

Table 7. Test of independence of the constructs in the model

Measurement	Constructs	Student Retention	Strategic Marketing Resources	Strategic Relationship Marketing Stratagems
Fornell-Lacker Criterion	Student Retention	0.684		
	Strategic Marketing Resources	0.585	0.761	
	Strategic Relationship Marketing Stratagems	0.264	0.171	0.710
F-Square	Student Retention		0.477	
	Strategic Marketing Resources			
	Strategic Relationship Marketing Stratagems	0.075		
Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)	Student Retention			
	Strategic Marketing Resources	0.877		
	Strategic Relationship Marketing Stratagem	0.462	0.291	

3.6 Significance of the Model and Hypothesis Test

The results in figure 2 are the t-value that measures the size of the difference relative to the variation in the sample data. The t-value is the calculated difference represented in units of standard error hence the greater the magnitude of t, the greater the evidence against the null hypothesis. The t-statistic determines the significance of the relationships in the model because it measures how many standard errors the coefficient is away from zero. Generally, any t-value greater than +2 or less than – 2 is acceptable. However, the higher the t-value >= 2 implies that the relationship is significant. It can be observed in figure 2 that all the relationships between the constructs and the factors influencing each construct have t-values greater than 2. This implies that the null hypothesis is rejected. Hence, student retention does have an indirect significant influence on the relationship between strategic relationship marketing stratagems and strategic marketing resources.
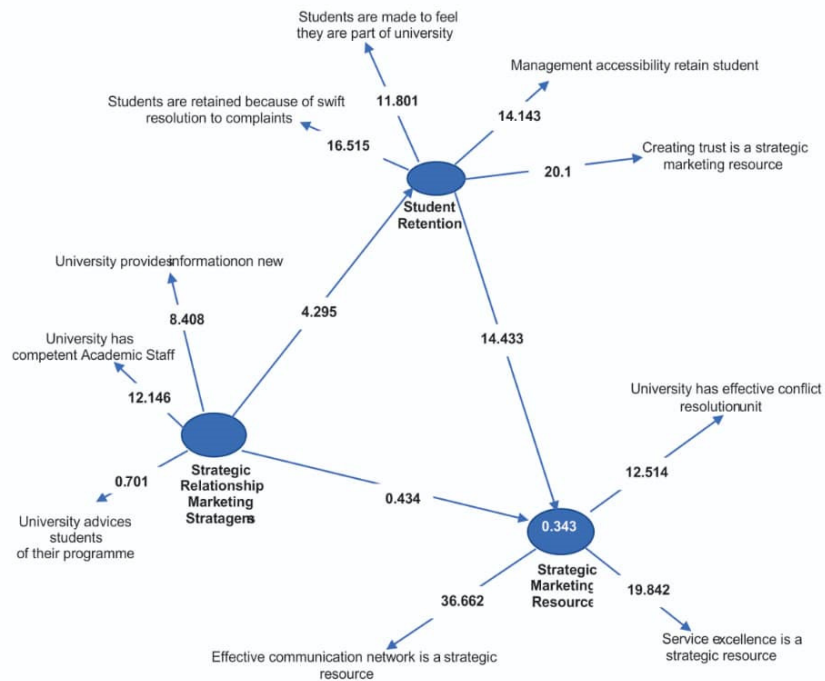
Figure 4.Significance of the "susten model

3.7 Predictiveness of the "Susten Model"

Evidence in figure 4 shows that strategic relationship marketing stratagem and customer relation about 18.5% of changes in strategic marketing resources. On the other hand, the strategic relationship marketing stratagem can predict about 3% of changes in strategic marketing resources. It means that the mediating role of customer (student) relations is very important for improving the strategic marketing resources of the universities.
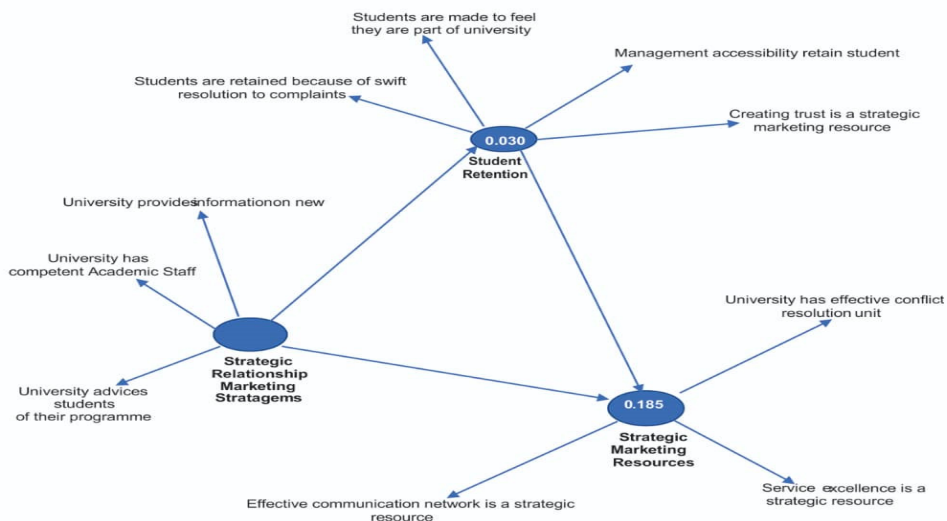

Figure 5. Predictiveness of the "susten model"

4. Conclusion

The purpose of this research work was to explain to the university fraternity how to attain sustainable retention from the competitive perspective using SRMS. The conclusion is that to attain sustainable retention, the university management should first of all (i) establish a well-structured conflict resolution chamber to resolve students' protests promptly (ii) deliver first-class educational services, and (iii) institute an effective and efficient relational communication system. Practically, management can further enhance this success if those stratagems are carefully positioned from the student perspective. In addition, management should be more (a)trustful (b) accessible (c) student-centered, and (d) proactive in conflict management. This means that managerial trust, accessibility, student-centredness, and proactiveness in conflict management should be safeguarded if the university wants to maximize its retention potentials within the university spectrum. Again, the result revealed that the universities ought to manage strategic relationship marketing stratagems as a strategic instrument (strategic marketing resource) (Ariwibowo, Saputro, & Haryanto, 2021) if it wants to gain a competitive advantage in the form of sustainable retention. The submission is that the management team of the Ghanaian universities should be circumspect in handling conflict-related issues both from student and faculty perspectives since it tends to have a long-term repercussion on sustainable retention. Secondly, management should institute interactive student-oriented first-class educational services. Finally, an effective and efficient educational communication system established with these distinct qualities (Ariwibowo, Saputro, & Haryanto, 2021) is rare, difficult to imitate, without a substitute, and valuable in the long run. Noted among universities in the sub-Sahara Africa (Mhlanga, 2021) are students' unrest against management, it is upon this upsurge that researchers (McConnell et al., 2021) are advocating for strong conflict resolution institutions within universities to curb these incongruities. Academic almanacs are usually distorted as a result of these protracted disputes (Radloff, 2021) Ghana is not left out in this scenario. To reiterate, enjoying sustainable retention with these stratagems, calls for a robust conflict resolution mechanism that is equally swift in resolving differences amicably. In a bit of making, it simpler for practitioners to operationalize this study, the "susten model" was formulated. Where "susten" means "sustainable retention" is a model that tells how university management could remain competitively steady in their retention venture (Adam, 2021). The "Susten Model" is prefaced on the belief that sustainable retention is constructed on formidable strategic marketing resources and further enhanced by dependable retention schemes. Thus, for competitive advantage in the form of sustainable retention the university management should first of all put in place these strategic relationship marketing stratagems (i) *well-structured conflict resolution chamber* to resolve students' and faculty concerns promptly, deliver (ii) *first-class educational services,* and institute (iii) an *effective and efficient educational communication system*. This assertion was strongly supported by (Bekelcha et al., 2021). Empirically, a conclusion was drawn that for long-term retention sustainability, the Ghanaian university management board should factor students' concerns and grievances in their decisions at the corporate level (Ampofo et al., 2021). Thus, the customer "centric approach" should be adopted as done in the western world where (Shaturaev, 2021) students are part of management. Educational services rendered should stand the test of time and should be able (Olssen, 2021) to compete with the international standards. In a more practical sense, the entire human capacity within the university spectrum should be well trusted (Ujakpa et al., 2021) easily reachable by all and sundry at any given material moment. Everyone within the university community should sing the same song, "We live to serve, and serving is the reason for our existence." As said by (Minshew et al., 2021) upon no grounds should student requests be turned down they are to be treated like kings and queens. Constant in-service training on customer orientation should be organised for faculty members on how to serve student needs as upheld (Hilton et al., 2021). Sustainable retention is not an episodic phenomenon but rather a never-ending prodigy premised on a deliberate effect, an efficient educational communication system, and a systematic first-class educational service as attested by the findings and stalwartly supported (Udayanganie, 2021) In conclusion if SRMS is craftily managed as a strategic marketing resource then management of the universities can attain a competitive advantage in the form of sustainable retention. In the near distant future, researchers can explore sustainable retention and help subject the "susten model" into intellectual scrutiny in other jurisdictions

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