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Marketing Resilience Capability for Sustainable Customer Relationships

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Abstract. Increasing environmental uncertainty, rapidly changing customer expectations, technological disruption, and intensified competition have challenged organizations to sustain long-term customer relationships using conventional marketing approaches. This study aims to conceptualize Marketing Resilience Capability (MRC) as a higher-order organizational capability that enables firms to anticipate, adapt to, and recover from market disruptions while preserving sustainable customer relationships. A qualitative multiple-case study design was employed involving organizations operating in the retail, service, and digital business sectors recognized for maintaining stable customer relationships during periods of market uncertainty. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with senior marketing managers and customer relationship executives, complemented by organizational documents, customer communication materials, and field observations. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis supported by the constant comparative method. The findings identify four interrelated dimensions of Marketing Resilience Capability namely adaptive market sensing, relational responsiveness, customer value reconfiguration, and relationship continuity management. Adaptive market sensing enables organizations to detect emerging market changes proactively; relational responsiveness strengthens customer trust through transparent and empathetic communication; customer value reconfiguration continuously aligns organizational offerings with evolving customer expectations; and relationship continuity management institutionalizes sustained customer engagement beyond transactional exchanges. Collectively, these capabilities enable organizations to maintain customer confidence, loyalty, and relationship continuity despite dynamic market conditions. The study further demonstrates that sustainable customer relationships are achieved not solely through superior products or operational excellence but through continuous organizational adaptation and relational capability development.

Keywords: Marketing Resilience Capability; Sustainable Customer Relationships; Dynamic Capability; Relationship Marketing; Qualitative Study; Thematic Analysis

1. Introduction

The increasing volatility of global markets, intensified competition, rapidly changing customer expectations, and recurring economic disruptions have transformed sustainable customer relationships into a strategic priority for organizations (Kang et al., 2020;

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Yousaf et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2023). Rather than relying solely on transactional exchanges, firms are expected to develop organizational capabilities that enable them to continuously adapt while maintaining long-term relationships with customers. Relationship Marketing Theory argues that sustainable competitive advantage is achieved through the establishment, development, and maintenance of enduring relationships founded on trust and commitment (Hunt et al., 2006; Lages et al., 2008; Tranová & Veneti, 2024).

The marketing literature has progressively shifted from transactional marketing toward relational marketing, customer engagement, customer experience, and value co-creation. Earlier studies emphasized trust, commitment, and relational exchanges as the foundations of long-term customer relationships (Morgan & Hunt, 1994), whereas subsequent research expanded the discussion to customer relationship management, service-dominant logic, and customer experience management (Payne et al., 2017; Vargo & Lusch, 2004). These developments indicate that marketing is increasingly viewed as a continuous process of creating and maintaining customer value rather than merely facilitating product exchanges. However, despite these theoretical advances, the capability required to preserve customer relationships during periods of market turbulence has received relatively limited conceptual attention.

Recent empirical studies have primarily examined customer loyalty, customer engagement, relationship quality, customer satisfaction, and brand trust as determinants of sustainable customer relationships. Marketing resilience has generally been discussed from the perspectives of supply-chain resilience, organizational resilience, crisis management, or business continuity, while its strategic role as a distinct marketing capability remains insufficiently explored (Gündüzyeli, 2025; Hasanah et al., 2025). Existing studies largely explain the outcomes of resilient organizations but provide limited understanding of how marketing functions develop adaptive mechanisms that continuously preserve customer relationships under conditions of uncertainty. Consequently, resilience is frequently treated as an organizational outcome rather than as a strategic marketing capability embedded within marketing processes.

A critical review of previous studies reveals several research gaps. First, Relationship Marketing Theory explains why trust and commitment are essential for sustaining relationships, yet it provides limited explanation regarding the organizational capabilities that enable firms to preserve these relationships during environmental disruptions (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Second, Dynamic Capability Theory emphasizes sensing, seizing, and transforming organizational resources (Teece et al., 1997), but its application has predominantly focused on innovation, technology, and strategic management rather than marketing relationship continuity. Third, prior marketing studies have largely investigated customer-level outcomes while paying less attention to firm-level adaptive capabilities that enable organizations to maintain relational stability across changing market conditions.

Addressing these limitations, this study introduces Marketing Resilience Capability as a novel conceptual construct representing an organization's ability to anticipate market changes, adapt marketing strategies, reconfigure customer value propositions, and sustain relationship continuity despite environmental uncertainty. Unlike existing constructs such as customer orientation, market orientation, relationship quality, or customer engagement, Marketing Resilience Capability emphasizes organizational adaptability as the central mechanism through which sustainable customer relationships are preserved. The construct is conceptually positioned at the intersection of Dynamic

Capability Theory and Relationship Marketing Theory, thereby extending both theoretical perspectives through a unified capability-based framework.

The proposed construct consists of four interrelated dimensions: adaptive market sensing, referring to the capability to identify emerging customer needs and market signals; relational responsiveness, describing the firm's ability to respond rapidly to customer expectations; customer value reconfiguration, reflecting continuous adaptation of value propositions according to changing customer preferences; and relationship continuity management, referring to the systematic capability to preserve customer trust, commitment, and interaction over time. Together, these dimensions conceptualize resilience not merely as organizational survival but as a proactive marketing capability supporting sustainable relational exchanges.

This study is theoretically significant because it extends Relationship Marketing Theory beyond the traditional emphasis on trust and commitment by incorporating organizational resilience as a strategic capability for maintaining customer relationships. Simultaneously, it broadens the application of Dynamic Capability Theory by demonstrating that adaptive organizational capabilities are equally relevant within the marketing domain. From a managerial perspective, the proposed framework provides organizations with strategic guidance for strengthening long-term customer relationships through adaptive marketing processes rather than relying exclusively on promotional activities or transactional performance.

Accordingly, the purpose of this study is to develop a conceptual understanding of Marketing Resilience Capability and explain how this capability contributes to sustainable customer relationships in dynamic business environments. Using a qualitative multiple-case study approach, the research seeks to identify the underlying dimensions of Marketing Resilience Capability, explore how organizations develop and implement these capabilities, and formulate an integrated conceptual framework that contributes to the advancement of relationship marketing and strategic marketing capability literature.

2. Methods

This study employed a qualitative research design using a multiple-case study approach to develop an in-depth understanding of how organizations build and implement Marketing Resilience Capability (MRC) in sustaining long-term customer relationships under conditions of market uncertainty (Cloutier, 2024; Pitman, 1998). A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the concept of MRC remains theoretically underexplored and requires contextual interpretation of organizational experiences, managerial decision-making, and adaptive marketing practices. Rather than testing predetermined hypotheses, the study sought to generate a conceptual explanation grounded in empirical evidence across organizations operating in dynamic competitive environments. The multiple-case design also enabled cross-case comparisons to identify both common patterns and unique contextual variations in organizational resilience capabilities.

The study involved organizations from the retail, service, and digital business sectors that demonstrated consistent customer retention and relationship continuity despite experiencing market disruptions, technological changes, or shifts in customer preferences (Cloutier, 2024; Hokmabadi et al., 2024; Lou et al., 2025; Pfajfar et al., 2024; Pitman, 1998). Participants were selected through purposive sampling, focusing on individuals who possessed strategic responsibilities in marketing and customer relationship management. The informants included senior marketing managers, customer relationship managers, digital marketing directors, and business development executives with a minimum of five years of managerial experience. Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews, allowing participants to describe their experiences in sensing market changes, responding to customer expectations, redesigning value propositions, and maintaining customer engagement during uncertain conditions. To enhance data richness and credibility, interview data were complemented with organizational documents, customer communication materials, internal marketing reports, and non-participant field observations of marketing activities and customer interaction practices.

Data analysis followed the principles of thematic analysis as proposed by Braun & Clarke (2006), combined with the constant comparative method derived from qualitative inquiry. All interviews were transcribed verbatim and repeatedly reviewed to ensure familiarity with the data. Initial open coding was conducted to identify meaningful statements related to organizational resilience and customer relationship practices. Similar codes were subsequently grouped into broader categories through iterative comparison across participants and organizational cases. These categories were continuously refined to develop higher-order themes representing the essential dimensions of Marketing Resilience Capability. Throughout the analysis, emerging interpretations were constantly compared with new evidence from different cases to strengthen conceptual consistency and reveal similarities as well as contextual differences across organizations.

The study adopted the qualitative rigor criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was enhanced through data triangulation across interviews, organizational documents, observations, and customer communication records, as well as member checking with selected participants to verify the accuracy of interpretations. Transferability was supported by providing detailed contextual descriptions of organizational settings and participant characteristics. Dependability was maintained through systematic documentation of coding procedures, analytical decisions, and iterative theme development, creating a transparent audit trail. Confirmability was strengthened through researcher reflexivity, peer debriefing, and continuous comparison between empirical evidence and theoretical interpretations, ensuring that the resulting conceptual framework emerged from participants' experiences rather than researcher assumptions. The analytical process ultimately produced an integrated framework explaining how adaptive market sensing, relational responsiveness, customer value reconfiguration, and relationship continuity management collectively constitute Marketing Resilience Capability for sustaining long-term customer relationships.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Adaptive Market Sensing Enables Proactive Customer Relationship Preservation

Adaptive market sensing represents the foundational dimension of Marketing Resilience Capability (MRC), enabling organizations to proactively preserve sustainable customer relationships amid market uncertainty. Across all organizational cases, participants consistently emphasized that resilience begins with the ability to continuously observe, interpret, and anticipate changes occurring within both the external and internal business environment. Rather than relying solely on historical sales reports or annual customer satisfaction surveys, resilient organizations establish ongoing monitoring mechanisms that capture evolving customer preferences, competitor strategies, technological innovations, regulatory developments, and macroeconomic conditions. One senior marketing manager explained:

"Customer expectations change much faster than our quarterly reports. If we wait until sales decline, we are already too late. Every week we monitor customer conversations, digital engagement, and competitor activities to understand what might happen next rather than what has already happened." (Participant 3)

Similarly, another participant stated:

"Market sensing is no longer a separate marketing activity. It has become part of our daily decision-making process because uncertainty has become the new normal." (Participant 8)

These narratives indicate that adaptive market sensing functions as an organizational capability for detecting weak market signals before they evolve into significant threats to customer relationships.

The thematic analysis further reveals that adaptive market sensing extends beyond the collection of market information toward collective organizational interpretation. Participants consistently described how resilient organizations integrate customer feedback, CRM databases, social media analytics, frontline employee observations, website traffic metrics, and competitor intelligence into collaborative strategic discussions. Marketing decisions are therefore based not on isolated datasets but on the synthesis of multiple information sources that collectively provide a comprehensive understanding of changing customer expectations. Several organizations reported conducting regular cross-functional meetings involving marketing, customer service, sales, and digital analytics teams to interpret emerging trends before formulating strategic responses. As one marketing director explained:

"Customer complaints alone do not tell the whole story. We combine online reviews, customer service reports, website behavior, and social media sentiment to understand what customers actually expect before making marketing decisions." (Participant 6)

Another participant emphasized:

"Sometimes frontline employees recognize changes in customer behavior earlier than our dashboards. Their observations become valuable early warning signals for us." (Participant 11)

These findings suggest that adaptive market sensing is fundamentally a knowledge integration capability that transforms dispersed organizational information into actionable market intelligence.

Another important pattern emerging from the interviews concerns the shift from reactive marketing toward anticipatory strategic adaptation. Participants repeatedly explained that organizations possessing strong market sensing capabilities rarely wait until customer dissatisfaction becomes visible before implementing strategic changes. Instead, they continuously anticipate future customer expectations by redesigning communication strategies, promotional activities, customer engagement programs, and service delivery systems in advance of market disruption. This proactive orientation enables organizations to reduce uncertainty while strengthening customer confidence. One participant explained:

"We don't redesign our campaigns because customers complain. We redesign them because we already see their expectations changing through digital interactions." (Participant 1)

Another senior manager added:

"Our objective is to solve tomorrow's customer problems today. The faster we recognize changing expectations, the easier it becomes to maintain customer trust." (Participant 9)

These interview excerpts demonstrate that adaptive market sensing facilitates strategic anticipation rather than organizational reaction, allowing firms to preserve relationship stability before service failures or customer dissatisfaction emerge.

Cross-case comparisons consistently demonstrate that organizations exhibiting highly developed adaptive market sensing capabilities maintain stronger customer relationships during periods of environmental uncertainty than organizations relying primarily on conventional marketing practices. Participants reported that customers perceived these organizations as responsive, attentive, and capable of understanding their evolving needs. Consequently, customers became more willing to continue long-term relationships despite economic fluctuations, technological disruptions, or competitive pressures. One participant observed:

"Customers appreciate that we seem to understand what they need before they even ask for it. That creates confidence and makes them less likely to switch to competitors." (Participant 5)

Similarly, another respondent stated:

"During market disruptions, customers do not expect perfection. They expect responsiveness. Because we monitor changes continuously, we can respond faster than competitors." (Participant 10)

These findings suggest that adaptive market sensing enhances organizational resilience by shortening response time while simultaneously reinforcing customer trust, commitment, and perceived organizational reliability.

The findings indicate that adaptive market sensing should be understood not merely as an environmental scanning activity but as a dynamic organizational learning capability that initiates the entire process of Marketing Resilience Capability. The capability enables organizations to continuously acquire, interpret, and utilize market intelligence to anticipate customer needs, redesign strategic actions, and preserve relational continuity before external uncertainty generates significant business risks. As illustrated across all investigated cases, organizations capable of integrating continuous market sensing with proactive decision-making consistently demonstrate greater resilience in sustaining customer relationships. Consequently, adaptive market sensing emerges as the strategic foundation upon which the remaining dimensions of Marketing Resilience Capability relational responsiveness, customer value reconfiguration, and relationship continuity management are subsequently developed.

Table 1 Themes of Adaptive Market Sensing Identified Across Organizational Cases

Main Theme	Representative Interview Evidence	Organizational Implication
Continuous Environmental Scanning	"Every week we monitor customer conversations, digital engagement, and competitor activities." (P3)	Early identification of environmental changes and emerging market disruptions.
Multi-Source Market Intelligence	"We combine online reviews, CRM data, website analytics, and customer service reports." (P6)	Comprehensive understanding of evolving customer expectations.
Cross-Functional Interpretation	"Frontline employees often recognize customer changes before our dashboards." (P11)	Accelerates organizational learning through collaborative interpretation.
Anticipatory Strategic	"We redesign campaigns because expectations change, not because	Enables proactive marketing adjustments before customer

Adaptation	customers complain." (P1)	dissatisfaction occurs.
Customer Relationship Preservation	"Customers trust us because we understand their needs before they ask." (P5)	Strengthens customer confidence, loyalty, and long-term relationship continuity.

Table 1 summarizes the dominant themes identified through thematic analysis across all organizational cases. The interview evidence illustrates a sequential process whereby organizations first engage in continuous environmental scanning, integrate multiple sources of market intelligence, collaboratively interpret emerging customer signals, and proactively redesign marketing strategies before customer dissatisfaction materializes. This sequence ultimately strengthens customer trust and relationship continuity. The consistency of these themes across participants indicates that adaptive market sensing functions not merely as an operational marketing activity but as a higher-order dynamic capability that enables organizations to anticipate environmental uncertainty and convert emerging market changes into opportunities for sustaining long-term customer relationships. The convergence of participant narratives also reinforces the credibility of adaptive market sensing as the foundational dimension of the proposed Marketing Resilience Capability (MRC) framework.

3.2. Relational Responsiveness Reinforces Customer Trust During Market Uncertainty

Relational responsiveness functions as the central relational mechanism through which organizations preserve customer trust during periods of market uncertainty. Across all investigated organizations, participants consistently emphasized that resilient marketing extends beyond delivering products and services efficiently; it requires organizations to demonstrate continuous responsiveness toward customers' evolving concerns, expectations, and emotional needs. Participants explained that during uncertain business conditions, customers become increasingly sensitive to how organizations communicate rather than merely what they offer. Consequently, organizations that maintain transparent, timely, and empathetic communication are more successful in preserving customer confidence than those focusing solely on operational performance. One senior marketing manager explained:

"Customers understand that disruptions happen. What determines whether they stay with us is how quickly and honestly we communicate when problems occur." (Participant 4)

Similarly, another participant observed:

"During uncertain periods, customers expect reassurance more than promotion. They want to know that someone is listening and willing to help." (Participant 9)

These interview narratives illustrate that relational responsiveness represents an interpersonal capability that reduces uncertainty by strengthening customers' perceptions of organizational reliability and sincerity.

The thematic analysis further demonstrates that relational responsiveness consists of several interconnected organizational practices, including rapid complaint resolution, proactive customer communication, personalized service recovery, continuous digital engagement, and flexible adaptation to individual customer circumstances. Participants explained that resilient organizations establish communication systems that allow customer inquiries and complaints to be addressed immediately through multiple channels such as social media, live chat, email, and customer relationship management platforms. Importantly, participants stressed that responsiveness is evaluated not solely by response speed but also by communication quality, empathy, and solution orientation. As one customer relationship manager explained:

"A fast response means very little if customers receive a generic answer. They appreciate personalized communication that shows we understand their specific situation." (Participant 7)

Another participant added:

"Every complaint becomes an opportunity to strengthen the relationship. Our goal is not simply to solve the problem but to make customers feel valued throughout the process." (Participant 12)

These findings indicate that relational responsiveness reflects a customer-centered communication philosophy in which organizational interactions are designed to reinforce trust through personalized engagement rather than standardized service procedures.

Another significant theme emerging from the interviews concerns the role of proactive communication in reducing customer uncertainty before problems escalate. Rather than waiting for customers to request information, resilient organizations actively provide updates regarding service changes, delivery schedules, promotional adjustments, policy revisions, or operational disruptions. Participants consistently explained that customers appreciate organizations that voluntarily communicate potential challenges because proactive communication demonstrates organizational accountability and transparency. Several managers described proactive communication as an investment in long-term relational credibility rather than a short-term marketing activity. One participant explained:

"Whenever there is uncertainty, we immediately inform customers before they contact us. Even if the news is not positive, transparency prevents misunderstanding and protects trust." (Participant 2)

Likewise, another respondent stated:

"Silence creates anxiety. Honest communication creates confidence. Customers forgive delays much more easily than they forgive uncertainty." (Participant 5)

These narratives suggest that proactive communication serves as an essential mechanism through which relational responsiveness minimizes perceived risk while reinforcing customers' emotional security during volatile market conditions.

Cross-case comparisons further reveal that relational responsiveness significantly strengthens both affective trust and relationship commitment. Participants consistently reported that organizations capable of maintaining frequent, personalized, and empathetic interactions experienced higher levels of customer loyalty even when competitors offered similar products or lower prices. Customers interpreted organizational responsiveness as evidence of genuine commitment rather than transactional interest, thereby increasing emotional attachment and reducing switching intentions. One marketing executive explained:

"Customers rarely leave because of one mistake. They leave because they feel ignored. When they know we are always available, they become much more loyal." (Participant 10)

Another participant similarly stated:

"Trust grows from consistent interactions, not from advertising campaigns. Every conversation either strengthens or weakens the relationship." (Participant 1)

These interview findings demonstrate that relational responsiveness contributes to sustainable customer relationships by creating repeated positive interaction experiences that gradually reinforce organizational credibility, emotional attachment, and mutual commitment.

Relational responsiveness should be conceptualized as a strategic relational capability that complements adaptive market sensing within the broader framework of Marketing Resilience Capability (MRC). While adaptive market sensing enables organizations to anticipate market changes, relational responsiveness determines how effectively organizations translate those insights into meaningful customer interactions. The capability therefore extends beyond operational responsiveness by integrating empathy, transparency, personalization, communication consistency, and organizational accountability into every customer touchpoint. Across all investigated cases, organizations demonstrating high relational responsiveness consistently reported stronger customer trust, greater relationship continuity, and enhanced resilience during market disruptions. These findings indicate that sustainable customer relationships are maintained not only through superior products or competitive pricing but also through continuous relational engagement that reassures customers, reduces uncertainty, and reinforces confidence in the organization's long-term commitment.

Table 2 Major Themes of Relational Responsiveness Across Organizational Cases

Main Theme	Representative Interview Evidence	Organizational Implication
Transparent and Timely Communication	*"Customers stay because we communicate honestly when problems occur."* (P4)	Reduces uncertainty and strengthens organizational credibility.
Personalized Customer Engagement	*"Customers value personalized responses more than automated replies."* (P7)	Enhances customer satisfaction and emotional connection.
Proactive Information Sharing	*"We inform customers before they contact us whenever disruptions occur."* (P2)	Prevents misunderstanding and increases customer confidence.
Empathetic Service Recovery	*"Every complaint is an opportunity to strengthen the relationship."* (P12)	Converts service failures into trust-building opportunities.
Relationship Commitment and Trust	*"Customers leave when they feel ignored, not because of one mistake."* (P10)	Reinforces long-term loyalty and relationship continuity.

Table 2 illustrates the five dominant themes that emerged from the thematic analysis regarding relational responsiveness. The interview evidence demonstrates that customer trust is reinforced through an integrated process beginning with transparent communication, followed by personalized engagement, proactive information sharing, empathetic service recovery, and ultimately the development of long-term relationship commitment. Rather than operating independently, these practices reinforce one another to establish a resilient relational ecosystem in which customers perceive the organization as reliable, attentive, and genuinely committed to their well-being. The consistency of these themes across multiple organizational cases provides strong empirical support for positioning relational responsiveness as the second core dimension of the proposed Marketing Resilience Capability (MRC) framework, emphasizing that resilience in marketing is achieved not only through strategic adaptability but also through sustained interpersonal relationships characterized by trust, empathy, and continuous communication.

3.3. Customer Value Reconfiguration and Relationship Continuity Management Sustain Long-Term Customer Relationships

Customer value reconfiguration and relationship continuity management jointly represent the strategic outcomes of Marketing Resilience Capability (MRC). Across all organizational cases, participants consistently emphasized that resilient organizations do not attempt to preserve existing value propositions when customer expectations change. Instead, they continuously redefine what customers perceive as valuable by adapting products, services, communication approaches, delivery mechanisms, and customer experiences in response to evolving market conditions. Participants explained that value is no longer embedded solely in the product itself but increasingly emerges through personalized experiences, convenience, responsiveness, and continuous interaction. Consequently, organizations capable of regularly reconfiguring customer value are better positioned to maintain customer relevance despite technological disruption and changing competitive landscapes. One senior marketing manager explained:

"What customers valued three years ago is not necessarily what they value today. If our value proposition remains unchanged while customer expectations evolve, we gradually lose relevance." (Participant 2)

Similarly, another participant noted:

"Our competitive advantage is no longer based on products alone. It comes from continuously redesigning the customer experience according to changing lifestyles and digital behavior." (Participant 8)

These narratives demonstrate that customer value reconfiguration functions as a continuous strategic renewal process through which organizations preserve customer relevance rather than merely protecting existing market positions.

The thematic analysis further reveals that customer value reconfiguration is achieved through an iterative organizational learning process involving customer feedback, digital analytics, service innovation, and collaborative decision-making across functional departments. Participants consistently described value creation as a dynamic process in which organizations continuously evaluate whether their products, services, communication channels, pricing strategies, and customer engagement mechanisms remain aligned with evolving customer needs. Rather than implementing large-scale strategic changes only after market disruptions occur, resilient organizations make incremental adjustments that gradually improve customer experiences while minimizing uncertainty. One participant explained:

"Every customer interaction teaches us something new. Small improvements implemented consistently create greater value than waiting for a major transformation." (Participant 11)

Another marketing executive stated:

"Innovation does not always mean launching a new product. Sometimes changing how customers interact with us creates much greater value." (Participant 6)

These findings indicate that customer value reconfiguration depends on organizational learning capabilities that continuously transform customer insights into meaningful service innovation and improved customer experiences.

Beyond value reconfiguration, participants consistently identified relationship continuity management as an equally important capability for sustaining long-term customer relationships. Organizations reported establishing systematic mechanisms to ensure that customer interactions remain continuous rather than episodic. These mechanisms include personalized loyalty programs, omnichannel communication platforms, proactive follow-up after purchases, customer education initiatives, digital communities, exclusive membership programs, and regular personalized interactions based on customer preferences. Participants emphasized that relationship continuity is intentionally designed rather than occurring naturally after successful transactions. As one customer relationship manager explained:

"The transaction is only the beginning of the relationship. Our responsibility starts after the purchase because that is when loyalty is actually developed." (Participant 4)

Similarly, another respondent stated:

"We schedule regular follow-up communication not to sell more products immediately, but to remind customers that we continue to care about their experience." (Participant 9)

These interview findings demonstrate that relationship continuity management shifts organizational attention from short-term sales performance toward continuous relational engagement that strengthens customer commitment over time.

Cross-case analysis further demonstrates that organizations integrating customer value reconfiguration with relationship continuity management consistently achieve stronger emotional attachment, customer loyalty, and relational resilience during periods of environmental uncertainty. Participants observed that customers remain committed not because organizations never experience service failures, but because organizations continuously adapt their value propositions while maintaining frequent and meaningful communication. Customers perceive these organizations as partners committed to long-term mutual value creation rather than purely transactional exchanges. One participant explained:

"Customers forgive occasional mistakes when they see that we continuously improve our services based on their feedback." (Participant 1)

Another senior marketing manager added:

"Loyalty grows when customers feel they are evolving together with the company. Continuous improvement creates that feeling of partnership." (Participant 7)

These narratives suggest that sustained customer relationships are primarily driven by organizations' willingness to evolve alongside their customers while preserving continuous interaction and shared value creation.

Sustainable customer relationships emerge through the dynamic interaction of four mutually reinforcing dimensions: adaptive market sensing, relational responsiveness, customer value reconfiguration, and relationship continuity management. Adaptive market sensing enables organizations to recognize environmental change, relational responsiveness strengthens customer trust through meaningful communication, customer value reconfiguration ensures that organizational offerings remain relevant, and relationship continuity management preserves long-term relational engagement beyond individual transactions. Together, these four dimensions constitute the integrated architecture of Marketing Resilience Capability, illustrating that marketing resilience is not a single organizational competence but a higher-order dynamic capability integrating environmental sensing, relational adaptation, continuous innovation, and long-term relationship governance. The empirical evidence therefore supports the proposition that organizations capable of simultaneously developing these four capabilities are significantly better positioned to sustain customer relationships and maintain competitive advantage in increasingly uncertain and rapidly changing business environments.

Table 3 Major Themes of Customer Value Reconfiguration and Relationship Continuity Management

Main Theme	Representative Interview Evidence	Organizational Implication
Continuous Customer Value Reconfiguration	“Our value proposition must evolve as customer expectations evolve.” (P2)	Maintains organizational relevance in dynamic market environments.
Customer-Centered Innovation	“Small improvements based on customer feedback create greater long-term value.” (P11)	Enhances customer experience through continuous organizational learning.
Relationship Continuity Management	“The transaction is only the beginning of the relationship.” (P4)	Shifts organizational focus from transactions to long-term engagement.
Proactive Long-Term Customer Engagement	“We regularly follow up because customers need to know we still care.” (P9)	Strengthens emotional attachment and customer commitment.
Integrated Marketing Resilience Capability	“Customers stay because we continue evolving together with them.” (P7)	Integrates adaptation, innovation, and relationship continuity into sustainable competitive advantage.

Table 3 summarizes the dominant themes emerging from the thematic analysis concerning customer value reconfiguration and relationship continuity management. The interview evidence illustrates a sequential process whereby organizations first redefine customer value according to changing expectations, transform customer insights into continuous innovation, establish structured mechanisms for maintaining post-purchase relationships, and reinforce long-term engagement through proactive communication and personalized interaction. Collectively, these practices enable organizations to move beyond transactional marketing toward an enduring relational orientation characterized by continuous mutual value creation. The convergence of evidence across multiple organizational cases further confirms that customer value reconfiguration and relationship continuity management operate as complementary dimensions within the broader Marketing Resilience Capability (MRC) framework. Together with adaptive market sensing and relational responsiveness, these capabilities form an integrated strategic architecture that enables organizations to maintain sustainable customer relationships despite ongoing technological change, market volatility, and increasing competitive pressure.

4. Discussion: Marketing Resilience Capability as a Dynamic Relational Capability for Sustainable Customer Relationships

The findings of this study demonstrate that Marketing Resilience Capability (MRC) is a higher-order organizational capability composed of four interdependent dimensions: adaptive market sensing, relational responsiveness, customer value reconfiguration, and relationship continuity management. These findings extend the Dynamic Capability Theory proposed by Teece et al. (1997), which argues that sustainable competitive advantage depends on an organization's ability to sense, seize, and transform in response to environmental change. The first dimension identified in this study, adaptive market sensing corresponds closely to the sensing capability described by Mandaci et al. (2019), whereby organizations continuously identify emerging opportunities and threats before competitors. However, the present findings suggest that sensing capability alone is insufficient for sustaining customer relationships. Instead, organizations must convert market intelligence into relational actions that preserve customer trust and continuously redefine customer value. Consequently, this study broadens Dynamic Capability Theory by demonstrating that resilience in marketing is fundamentally relational rather than purely operational.

The findings also reinforce the central assumptions of Relationship Marketing Theory, particularly the commitment-trust model developed by Morgan & Hunt (1994). Their theory argues that trust and commitment constitute the primary mediators of successful long-term business relationships. The empirical findings reveal that relational responsiveness strengthens customer trust through transparent communication, empathetic service recovery, and personalized engagement during periods of uncertainty. Rather than perceiving trust as the outcome of product quality alone, participants consistently described trust as emerging from continuous interpersonal interaction and organizational reliability. This finding supports Morgan & Hunt (1994) argument while extending it by demonstrating that trust becomes even more critical under volatile market conditions. During uncertainty, customers evaluate organizational resilience through communication quality, responsiveness, and perceived commitment rather than transactional performance alone. Therefore, relational responsiveness emerges as the mechanism through which Dynamic Capability is translated into relational commitment.

The findings align with the Service-Dominant Logic (SDL) introduced by Vargo & Lusch (2008), which conceptualizes value as being co-created through ongoing interactions between organizations and customers rather than embedded within products. The identified dimension of customer value reconfiguration illustrates that resilient organizations continuously redesign their value propositions based on changing customer expectations and contextual conditions. Participants consistently explained that innovation was not restricted to product development but also included redesigning customer experiences, communication channels, service delivery, and digital engagement. These findings support SDL by demonstrating that customer value is dynamic, contextual, and continuously reconstructed through organizational learning and customer interaction. However, this study extends Vargo and Lusch's framework by showing that value co-creation itself becomes an adaptive resilience mechanism, enabling organizations to preserve relevance despite environmental disruption.

The results are equally consistent with the Market Orientation Theory developed by Kohli & Jaworski (1990) and further refined by Narver & Slater (1990). Market orientation emphasizes the generation, dissemination, and organizational responsiveness to market intelligence as essential drivers of superior organizational performance. The present findings confirm that organizations capable of integrating customer feedback, competitor intelligence, digital analytics, and frontline employee knowledge demonstrate greater adaptability and stronger customer relationships. Nevertheless, this study advances Market Orientation Theory by showing that market intelligence should not be viewed solely as a source of competitive advantage but also as the foundation of organizational resilience. Adaptive market sensing enables organizations not merely to understand markets but to anticipate discontinuities before they influence customer trust and relationship continuity. Thus, market orientation evolves from an information-processing capability into a resilience-generating capability.

Another important theoretical implication emerges from the concept of organizational resilience. Previous studies define organizational resilience as the capability to anticipate, absorb, recover from, and adapt to unexpected disruptions (Ahmić & Ćosić, 2025; Duchek, 2020). While existing resilience literature has predominantly focused on operational continuity, supply chain resilience, or crisis management, the present findings introduce a marketing perspective by demonstrating that resilience is equally reflected in the organization's capacity to sustain customer relationships. The four dimensions identified in this study collectively illustrate that marketing resilience is not achieved through crisis recovery alone but through continuous relational adaptation before, during, and after environmental change. In this regard, Marketing Resilience Capability complements existing organizational resilience literature by positioning customer relationship preservation as a strategic indicator of organizational resilience rather than merely an operational outcome.

This study contributes to marketing theory by proposing Marketing Resilience Capability (MRC) as a novel conceptual framework integrating Dynamic Capability Theory, Relationship Marketing Theory, Service-Dominant Logic, Market Orientation Theory, and Organizational Resilience Theory (Lewin & Johnston, 1997; Stavros & Westberg, 2009). Unlike previous studies that examine these perspectives separately, the present findings demonstrate that sustainable customer relationships emerge through the interaction of four sequential yet mutually reinforcing capabilities: adaptive market sensing identifies environmental change; relational responsiveness transforms market intelligence into customer trust; customer value reconfiguration continuously renews organizational relevance; and relationship continuity management institutionalizes long-term customer engagement. This integrated framework provides a more comprehensive theoretical explanation of how organizations maintain sustainable customer relationships under conditions of increasing environmental uncertainty. Accordingly, Marketing Resilience Capability may be conceptualized as a higher-order dynamic relational capability that enables organizations not only to survive market turbulence but also to strengthen customer loyalty, relational continuity, and long-term competitive advantage through continuous adaptation and collaborative value creation.

4. Conclusions

This study conceptualizes Marketing Resilience Capability (MRC) as a higher-order organizational capability that enables firms to sustain long-term customer relationships in increasingly volatile and uncertain market environments. The qualitative multiple-case analysis identified four interrelated dimensions that collectively constitute Marketing Resilience Capability: adaptive market sensing, relational responsiveness, customer value reconfiguration, and relationship continuity management. The findings demonstrate that resilient organizations continuously monitor environmental changes, proactively interpret customer expectations, and transform market intelligence into adaptive marketing actions before disruptions significantly affect customer relationships. Furthermore, organizations that consistently communicate with empathy, redesign customer value propositions, and maintain continuous post-purchase engagement are more successful in preserving customer trust, commitment, and relationship continuity than organizations relying primarily on transactional marketing approaches. These findings indicate that sustainable customer relationships are not achieved through operational efficiency alone but through continuous organizational adaptation and relational capability development.

The discussion extends several established theoretical perspectives by integrating Dynamic Capability Theory, Relationship Marketing Theory, Service-Dominant Logic, Market Orientation Theory, Resource-Based View, and Organizational Resilience Theory into a unified conceptual framework. While previous studies have largely examined these theories independently, this study demonstrates that they collectively explain how organizations develop resilience through sequential yet mutually reinforcing capabilities. Adaptive market sensing enables organizations to identify environmental change; relational responsiveness translates organizational awareness into customer trust; customer value reconfiguration maintains organizational relevance through continuous innovation; and relationship continuity management institutionalizes long-term relational engagement. Accordingly, this study proposes Marketing Resilience Capability as a novel higher-order dynamic relational capability that extends existing marketing literature by emphasizing resilience as an integrated strategic process linking environmental adaptation, value creation, and sustainable customer relationship management.

Despite these contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the qualitative multiple-case design prioritizes theoretical depth rather than statistical generalizability, limiting the transferability of findings across broader industrial contexts. Second, the research focuses on organizations operating within selected retail, service, and digital business sectors, leaving opportunities to examine Marketing Resilience Capability in manufacturing, healthcare, public organizations, and nonprofit institutions. Third, the proposed conceptual framework has not yet been empirically validated using quantitative or longitudinal methods. Future research should therefore develop and validate multidimensional measurement scales for Marketing Resilience Capability, investigate causal relationships among its four dimensions using structural equation modeling, and examine potential moderating variables such as digital transformation capability, artificial intelligence adoption, organizational culture, environmental turbulence, and customer participation. Longitudinal and cross-cultural studies are also recommended to evaluate the evolution of Marketing Resilience Capability across different institutional and competitive environments.

Declaration of conflicting interests

All authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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