

Factors affecting the quality of manufacturer - distributor relationship in the plastic industry in Vietnam

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ABSTRACT

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This study explores and examines the factors that affect the composition of the quality relationship between manufacturers and distributors in the context of the plastic industry in Vietnam. Qualitative research worked on single and group discussions with 23 manufacturers and distributors in the plastics industry. Quantitative research directly interviewed 560 plastic product distributors in Ho Chi Minh City area and Southern provinces. The results of the study determined the composition of the relationship quality including three factors of trust, commitment and satisfaction; six factors of product quality, delivery quality, market information, communication, personal interaction, and visits affect the quality of the relationship between manufacturer and distributor.

1. Introduction

In the competitive market, the success of businesses is partly dependent on other businesses, and the quality of relationships is an important factor to improve competitive advantage (Anderson & Narus, 1990). Relationship Quality (RQ) is considered a structure made up of many supporting and complementing components (Dwyer, Schurr, & Oh, 1987). In recent years, there have been many studies on the factors affecting RQ (Aurier & Séré de Lanauze, 2011; Leonidou, Barnes, & Talias, 2006; Loureiro & Cunha, 2017; Smith, 1998; Velez, Sanchez, Florez, & Alvarez-Dardet, 2015). However, those pieces of research have not shown common consent on the factors affecting RQ (Athanasopoulou, 2008, 2009; Naoui & Zaiem, 2010; Woo & Ennew, 2004). According to Athanasopoulou (2009, p. 583), different research contexts would give different results on factors affecting RQ. Besides, most of the previous studies examined the factors affecting RQ in the relationship between buyers and sellers in general, B2B relations, or other relationships. Table 1 shows, among 64 documents on RQ summarized by Athanasopoulou (2009) from 1987 - 2007, there were 14 studies focused on factors affecting RQ. In it, there were only two studies on the relationship between the Car Manufacturer and their dealers (Dwyer et al., 1987; Kumar, Scheer, & Steenkamp, 1995). Of the 78 RQ studies summarized by the author from 2008 - 2017, 15 studies focused on the factors affecting RQ. In it, there was only one study on the relationship between the Portuguese Wine Manufacturer and Chinese Distributor (Loureiro & Cunha, 2017). Thus, very few studies consider RQ in the specific relationship between Manufacturer and Distributor.

Table 1

Summary of studies on factors affecting the composition of Relationship Quality

No	Author	Background of research
A	The studies compiled by Athanasopoulou (2009)	
1	Dwyer et al. (1987)	The relationship between the car manufacturer and their dealers in the United States
2	Lagace, Dahlstrom, and Gassenheimer (1991)	The relationship between doctors and pharmaceutical salespeople in the United States
3	Johnson, Sakano, Cote, and Onzo (1993)	Relationship between Japanese importer and US manufacturer
4	Wray, Palmer, and Bejou (1994)	The relationship between financial intermediaries and financial service consumers in the United States
5	Kumar et al. (1995)	The relationship between the car manufacturer and their dealers in the United States and the Netherlands
6	Bejou, Wray, and Ingram (1996)	The relationship between salespeople and customers in financial services in the United States
7	Smith (1998)	Relationship between purchasing experts and sales representatives in Canada
8	Hopkinson and Hogarth-Scott (1999)	The relationship between the franchise parties
9	Baker, Simpson and Siguaw (1999)	The relationship between suppliers and their agents in the US
10	Hibbard, Kumar, and Stern (2001)	The relationship between suppliers and their agents in the US
11	Walter, Muller, Helfert, and Ritter (2003)	The relationship between suppliers and professional buyers in various industries in Germany
12	Van Bruggen, Kacker, and Nieuwlaat (2005)	Relationship between B2B professional painters and paint distributors in Belgium and the Netherlands
13	Leonidou et al. (2006)	The relationship between US exporters and importers
14	Ndubisi (2006)	Relationship between banks and retail customers in Malaysia
B	The research synthesized by the author	
1	Skarmas, Katsikeas, Spyropoulou, and Sangari (2008)	The relationship between the distributor of imports and foreign suppliers in England
2	Clark, Adjei, and Yancey (2009)	The relationship between the Restaurant and their customers in the Southeast United States

No	Author	Background of research
3	T. T. M. Nguyen and T. D. Nguyen (2010)	Relationship between Vietnamese exporters and foreign importers
4	Aurier and Séré de Lanauze (2011)	The relationship between customers and the brand image of the manufacturer in Supermarkets in France
5	T. D. Nguyen and T. T. M. Nguyen (2011)	Quality brand relationship of some consumer products in Vietnam
6	Shpetim (2012)	The relationship between partners in the supply chain: food, construction, tourism, hospital, shoe leather ... in Albania
7	Ebrahimi, Haghghinasab, Sattari, and Roghanian (2013)	Relationship between partners in food distribution channels in Iranian
8	Moliner, Moliner, and Sanchez-Garcia (2013)	B2B relationship in Spain
9	Athanasopoulou, Kalogeropoulou, and Douvis (2013)	Relationship between customers and sports service providers in Greece
10	Pepur, Mihanovic, and Pepur (2013)	Relationship in financial services of hotels in Croatia
11	Madupalli, Pannirselvam, and Williams (2014)	Relationship between cultural suppliers in the United States
12	T. T. M. Nguyen and T. D. Nguyen (2014)	Relationship between Vietnamese exporters and foreign importers
13	Velez et al. (2015)	Relationship between exporting small and medium enterprises and foreign intermediaries in Spain
14	Japutra, Keni, and Nguyen (2015)	The relationship between consumers and the brand logo in Indonesia
15	Loureiro and Cunha (2017)	Relationship between Portuguese Wine Manufacturer and Chinese Distributor

Source: Author's synthesis

In the practical context, plastic industry is a strategic industry in Vietnam. The annual growth rate in the 2013 - 2017 period is from 16% - 18%. According to the statistics of Vietnam Plastics Association, in 2018, the country has more than 2,000 enterprises producing and trading plastic products, of which more than 80% are small and medium enterprises. These production and distribution units are less interested in the quality of relationships, so they often face difficulties in product consumption, market information, etc. According to T. D. Nguyen and T. T. M. Nguyen (2011, p. 319), Vietnamese manufacturers need to find ways to establish quality relationships with distributors.

In addition, in Vietnam, there has no document studying the factors affecting RQ between manufacturers and distributors in the plastic industry. To fill the gap, this study aims to discover and measure the component scale of RQ and the factors affecting the composition of RQ between producers and distributors in the context of the plastic industry in a transition economy like Vietnam. The research results revealed that three components of RQ are trust, commitment, and satisfaction; six factors affect the composition of RQ: product quality, delivery quality, market information, communication, personal interaction, and visits. The results of this study added to the theory of RQ between manufacturer - distributor in the context of transition economy; discovering the visitation scale, developing the scale of market information from the scale of market information system of Sabherwal and Chan (2001); three scales of product quality, quality of delivery, and personal interaction are derived from the relationship value which is now accepted in RQ research, these factors affect to the composition of RQ between manufacturer - distributor, contributing to the scale system of factors affecting RQ components. Also, practically, the results of the study help manufacturers identify the most important factors affecting RQ with distributors. Thus, propose strategies and measures to maintain and develop the relationship between manufacturers - distributors.

The next part of this study presents theories and hypotheses, research methodology, research results, discussions, conclusions and implications, limitations, and directions for further research.

2. Theoretical and hypothetical basis

2.1. Relationship quality

Quality Relationship (RQ) is derived from relationship marketing. According to Berry (1995, p. 236), relationship marketing is the attraction, maintenance, and organization of activities to enhance relationships with customers. Crosby, Evans, and Cowless (1990) argued that seller experience and sales behavior were important to create and maintain long-term business relationships with customers. The purpose of relationship marketing is to create, manage relationships with customers and other partners so that the parties were in a relationship that satisfies both purpose and mutual benefit (Grönroos, Storbacka, & Strandvik, 1994). RQ is an extension of relationship marketing (Bojei & Alwie, 2010), referring to customers' perceptions of relationships, meeting customers' goals, and wants (Jarvelin & Lehtinen, 1996).

Recently, there have been many studies on the concept of RQ. According to Dwyer et al. (1987), RQ is an overall structure consisting of several important relationship results reflecting the overall nature of the exchange relationship. RQ includes conflict, trust, commitment, investment willingness, and expectation of continuity (Kumar et al., 1995). Skarmeas et al. (2008, p. 23) argued that RQ is a high-level structure of trust, commitment, and satisfaction. RQ includes satisfaction and trust (Huang, Davison, & Liu, 2014, p. 954). According to Izogo, Reza, Ogba, and Oraedu (2017), RQ is a structure that included trust and satisfaction. Thus, the above studies have not had a consensus on the composition of relationship quality (Athanasopoulou, 2009; Bove & Johnson, 2001; Naude & Buttle, 2000; Rauyruen & Miller, 2007).

2.2. Composition of relationship quality

According to Naoui and Zaiem (2010, p. 142), the components of RQ could be divided into three groups: (1) *Group of behavioral intention*: sales orientation, communication, and opportunism ...; (2) *Group of relationships*: satisfaction, commitment, and trust; and (3) *Group of results of the relationship*: economic benefits, customer benefits, etc. In which, the relationship group, including trust, commitment, and satisfaction was said to be the outstanding factors RQ

(Crosby et al., 1990; Kumar et al., 1995; Moliner et al., 2013; Skarmeas et al., 2008). This study performed a qualitative method, through bilateral discussion (sample n = 15) and group discussion (sample n = 8) with managers of manufacturing and distribution companies in the plastic industry in HCMC. Ho Chi Minh City discovered that belief, commitment, and satisfaction are the three components of RQ.

Trust: A willingness to rely on an exchange partner that is trusted (Moorman, Zaltman, & Deshpande, 1993; Skarmeas et al., 2008); is the prestige, credibility, and benevolence of exchange partners (Doney & Cannon, 1997; Lindsfold, 1978). In business relationships, customers try to reduce risk by choosing a provider that is deemed reliable (Ulaga & Eggert, 2006).

Commitment: is a long-term desire to maintain a relationship value (Moorman et al., 1993), which is the foundation of relationship marketing (Ulaga & Eggert, 2006). Morgan and Hunt (1994, p. 23) argued that commitment is the key to achieve valuable outcomes for relationships. A high level of commitment will help stabilize relationships (Ulaga & Eggert, 2006).

Satisfaction: According to Geyskens, Steenkamp, and Kumar (1999), satisfaction refers to the social as well as economic aspects of the exchange, which is an essential element of successful relationships between companies (Jap & Ganesan, 2000; Skarmeas et al., 2008). Building satisfaction is essential, consistent with many studies in the business relationship between shoppers and suppliers (Geyskens et al., 1999; Ulaga & Eggert, 2006).

2.3. Factors affecting the quality of relationships

Factors affecting RQ have been mentioned by many studies (Athanasopoulou, 2008, 2009; Naoui & Zaiem, 2010). However, studies do not have a general agreement on the factors affecting RQ (Naoui & Zaiem, 2010). According to Athanasopoulou (2009, p. 600), the factors affecting RQ are classified into four main groups: (1) Group of relationships (buyers and sellers); (2) Group of relationship attributes; (3) Group of supply characteristics and (4) Group of environmental factors. This study selected several factors to perform the qualitative method, through bilateral discussion and group discussion with 23 managers in the plastic industry in HCMC. As a result, six factors have been identified affecting RQ: (i) Product quality; (ii) Delivery quality; (iii) Market information; (iv) Communication; (v) Personal interaction; and (vi) Visit. To formulate the hypotheses about the factors affecting RQ between manufacturer and distributor, the next section presents the effect of factors on the components of RQ.

Product quality affects the components of RQ: According to Ulaga (2003, p. 683), product quality is the degree to which the supplier's product meets the customer's technical standard requirements. In the relationship between distributor - manufacturer, distributor keeps a relationship with manufacturer to always be provided with high quality and reliable products (T. D. Nguyen & T. T. M. Nguyen, 2011). According to Ulaga and Eggert (2006, p. 322), the relationship value is a precursor to RQ. However, very few documents considering product quality affect RQ. Because product quality is an indispensable element of customer value (Ulaga & Eggert, 2006), and when suppliers sell high-quality products, they will positively impact RQ (Chen, Su, & Ro, 2017, p. 247). In addition, in qualitative research, experts argue that when a manufacturer gives a distributor good quality products, it will create a trust for distributor, proving that the commitments between the two parties have been made, and when a distributor can sell a product, the manufacturer feels that the distributor has performed well and they are satisfied with each other. Therefore, based on research by T. D. Nguyen and T. T. M. Nguyen (2011), our study examined how product quality impacts on three components (trust, commitment, and satisfaction) of the quality relationship between manufacturer and distributor, with three hypotheses as follows:

H1a: Product quality has a positive impact on trust between a manufacturer and a distributor

H1b: Product quality has a positive impact on the commitment between manufacturer and distributor

H1c: Product quality has a positive impact on satisfaction between a manufacturer and a distributor

Delivery quality affects components of RQ: Delivery is the process of transporting goods from source location to predetermined destination (Nishio & Kishino, 1999), and is a source of strategic measures in the supply chain (Forslund, Jonsson, & Mattsson, 2009). Quality of delivery is a factor that increases the value of the relationship between manufacturer and distributor (T. D. Nguyen & T. T. M. Nguyen, 2011, p. 320). On the other hand, in the bilateral and group discussions with experts in qualitative research, they said that when the manufacturer ensures fully, timely and accurate delivery of products and goods, this will gain trust to the distributor, so the manufacturer has made commitments to the distributor on delivery, and then they are satisfied with each other. However, very little research considers the delivery factor affecting the quality of relationships. Based on documents by T. D. Nguyen and T. T. M. Nguyen (2011), this study examined the impact of delivery quality on the three components of the relationship quality between manufacturer and distributor, with the following hypotheses:

H2a: Delivery quality has a positive impact on trust between a manufacturer and a distributor

H2b: Delivery quality has a positive impact on the commitment between a manufacturer and a distributor

H2c: Delivery quality has a positive impact on satisfaction between a manufacturer and a distributor

Market information affects the components of RQ: Harmancioglu, Grinstein, and Goldman (2010) argued that market information is the external data related to the present and future of a business. In the manufacturer - distributor relationship, appropriate information from the manufacturer will help the distributor understand the production plan, changes in product technology (T. D. Nguyen and T. T. M. Nguyen, 2011). Because market information is central to decision making (Collins & Clark, 2003) and plays an important role in business relationships (Cannon & Homburg, 2001). And in qualitative research, the experts explained that, due to the characteristics of the plastic industry, the manufacturer does market research and provides information for the distributor. Therefore, when the manufacturer fully and timely provides market information for the distributor, it will create confidence for the distributor, the manufacturer committed to provide market information, and so the distributor will be satisfied with the manufacturer. Based on research by Sabherwal and Chan (2001), our study examined the impact of market information on the three components of the relationship quality between manufacturer and distributor, with the following theory:

H3a: Market information has a positive impact on trust between a manufacturer and a distributor

H3b: Market information has a positive impact on the commitment between a manufacturer and a distributor

H3c: Market information has a positive impact on satisfaction between a manufacturer and a distributor

Communication affects the components of RQ: Communication is to provide customers with complete information as well as listening to them when they need to communicate (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985; Tohidinia & Haghghi, 2011). Communication between the manufacturer and the distributor is the glue to keep their relationship (Song & Zhao, 2004). If ineffective communication will significantly affect commitment, satisfaction, and ultimately affect RQ (Bojei & Alwie, 2010, p. 88). Besides, experts in qualitative research argue that when the manufacturer communicates well with the distributor about ordering, delivery, and payment, the two parties will understand each other, thereby creating a trust for the distributor. Through reviewing the literature, very little research has been done on the communication that affects the quality of the relationship between manufacturer and distributor. Based on two studies (Rodríguez-del-Bosque, Agudo, & Gutierrez, 2006; Tohidinia & Haghghi, 2011), we study communication that affects three components of the manufacturer relationship quality - distributor, with the following assumptions:

H4a: Communication has a positive impact on trust between a manufacturer and a distributor

H4b: Communication has a positive impact on the commitment between a manufacturer and a distributor

H4c: Communication has a positive impact on satisfaction between a manufacturer and a distributor

Personal interaction affects the components of RQ: Personal interaction is an important element of interaction between organizations (Mainela & Ulkuniemi, 2013). In the relationship between manufacturer and distributor, personal interaction involves an individual-level interaction between manufacturer and distributor (T. D. Nguyen & T. T. M. Nguyen, 2011; Ulaga, 2003). Improving personal interaction between manufacturer and distributor will benefit both parties through better communication and better performance (Cater & Cater, 2010). Because individuals play an important role in any business relationship (Ulaga, 2003). On the other hand, in qualitative research, experts say, enhancing personal interaction between manufacturer and distributor will help both parties have more opportunities to communicate, communicate better, and understand each other's goals. Since then, there has been an increase in trust and satisfaction due to the commitment of exchange levels between the two parties. However, very few documents consider personal interaction affecting the quality of relationships. Based on research by T. D. Nguyen and T. T. M. Nguyen (2011), this study examined how the individual interaction factor affects three components of the quality of relationship manufacturer - distributor, with the following assumptions:

H5a: Personal interaction has a positive impact on trust between a manufacturer and a distributor

H5b: Personal interaction has a positive impact on the commitment between a manufacturer and a distributor

H5c: Personal interaction has a positive impact on satisfaction between a manufacturer and a distributor

Visiting affects the components of RQ: According to John and Christopher (1999, p. 1287), suppliers visit their customers to consider their business ability and financial capacity. Some studies have mentioned the need to visit customers and make plans and frequencies to visit customers (Baldoquin de la Pena, Escalera Farinas, & Linfati, 2014; Narus & Anderson, 1987). In

the relationship between manufacturer and distributor, manufacturer visits distributor to make agreements on sales policies and conduct orders (Narus & Anderson, 1987, p. 37). The frequency with which a manufacturer visits customers in business relationships reflects the intensity of information gathering and that customers will have better sales policies (John & Christopher, 1999, p. 1288). The above documents only mention the need to visit customers, consider planning, visit schedules. Very few research papers on visiting scales affect RQ. Because visits are an equally important element in business strategies and strategies of businesses (Baldoquin et al., 2014, p. 333).

Moreover, experts in qualitative research explained that the more manufacturer visits distributor (or vice versa), the more they understand each other. Distributor feels that the publisher is interested in them so they trust the manufacturer, the requirements of the distributor for the publisher are satisfied, so they are satisfied with the manufacturer, from which the commitments between both parties are possible. Therefore, our study examined how the visitation factor affects the three components of the quality relationship between manufacturer and distributor, with the following assumptions:

H6a: Visiting has a positive impact on trust between a manufacturer and a distributor

H6b: Visiting has a positive impact on the commitment between a manufacturer and a distributor

H6c: Visiting has a positive impact on satisfaction between a manufacturer and a distributor

2.4. Research models

Based on the above theory and 18 hypotheses, the theoretical model is proposed in Figure 1.

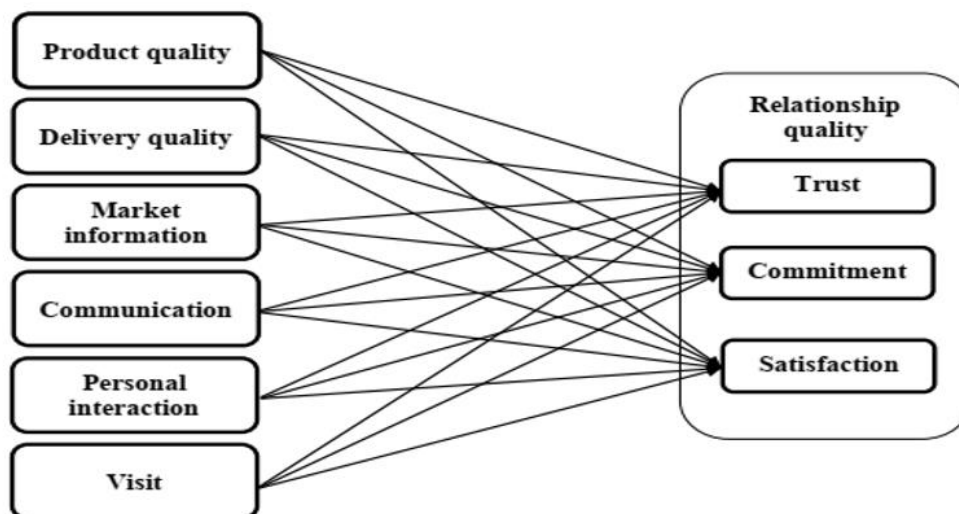


Figure 1. Theoretical model

3. Research methods

3.1. Observation scale and variable

The observed variable of the scales in the questionnaire of this study is based on the relevant studies presented in Table 2. Through qualitative research, the experts have commented and modified the sentence to suit the context in Vietnam. After editing, the preliminary questionnaire has 9 scales and 36 observed variables. The seven-point Likert scale is used to assess

the level of the consent of questions, with 1 (completely disagree), ... to 7 (totally agree). This study examined distributors (or from the buyer's point of view). Because most of the previous research on RQ surveyed from the perspective of buyers. On the other hand, according to Ural (2009), the evaluation of quality from the two sides' point of view may give similar results. Also, in the plastic industry in Vietnam, the number of distributors is higher than that of manufacturers, the mass survey will result in more generalized results.

Table 2

Observation scale and variable

Observation scale	Encoded	Number of variables	Related research
Trust	Tr	5	Ulaga and Eggert (2006), Skarmeas et al. (2008)
Commitment	Co	4	
Satisfaction	Sa	4	
Product quality	Pq	3	T. D. Nguyen and T. T. M. Nguyen (2011)
Delivery quality	Dq	3	
Market information	Mi	4	Sabherwal and Chan (2001)
Communication	Com	5	Rodríguez-del-Bosque et al. (2006), Tohidinia and Haghghi (2011)
Personal interaction	Pi	4	T. D. Nguyen and T. T. M. Nguyen (2011)
Visit	Vi	4	Explores in qualitative research

Source: Author's synthesis

3.2. Data and analytical methods

Qualitative research was through hands-on discussion and group discussion with 23 managers of plastic product manufacturing and distribution enterprises in Ho Chi Minh City to explore scales, observed variables on ingredients and Factors affecting RQ.

The preliminary quantitative method of surveying distributor plastic products in HCMC area was using non-probability sampling, using the convenience sampling method combined with judgment sampling to select patterns. The total number of survey samples was 170. Use 170 questionnaires to interview. The number of questionnaires to be returned is 148. The number of satisfactory questionnaires is 136. Use Cronbach alpha and exploratory factor analysis to evaluate the reliability and scale values.

The quantitative method officially interviewed distributors plastic products in Ho Chi Minh City area, Western provinces, and some Southeast provinces. The list of distributors is provided by Vietnam Plastics Association and some major Manufacturer. However, data is not complete, it can't choose the sample under probability sampling. So quantitative research gets non-probability sampling using quota sampling, divide level under the group to choose a sample. According to Sarstedt, Bengart, Shaltoni, and Lehmann, (2017, p. 2), getting probability sampling is the main method in many decades, however, due to the advantages of cost and convenience, non-probability sampling always finds a position in academic research. Theoretically, non-probability sampling can achieve the same results as probability samples (Sarstedt et al., 2017, p. 3). Besides, some

researchers believed that the quota sampling method can make results comparable to probability sampling results (Brick, 2011; Cumming, 1990; Yang & Banamah, 2014). The total number of selected samples is 700. Use 700 questionnaires to interview. The number of questionnaires to be returned is 616. The number of questionnaires is 560. Cronbach alpha and EFA analysis continue to be used. Scale test by CFA analysis. Check the appropriateness of the model and research hypothesis with SEM model.

4. Research results

4.1. Evaluate the scale

Preliminary assessment: Results of reliability assessment of scale with Cronbach alpha coefficient. Scale: Trust (Tr), Commitment (Co), Satisfaction (Sa), Product quality (Pq), Delivery quality (Dq), Personal interaction (Pi), Marketing information (Mi), Visit (Vi) all ensure the necessary reliability, with the coefficient $\alpha > .60$. The correlation coefficient of the total observed variables is $> .30$. For the Communication scale (Com), the variable Com2 has the total variable correlation coefficient of $.242 < .30$ so this variable is eliminated.

Results of evaluation of scale values by EFA analysis, concepts in group 1 (elements of RQ) have 3 factors extracted at Eigenvalue = $2.361 > 1$ and total variance extracted is $67.583\% > 60\%$. The concepts in group 2 (factors affecting RQ) have 6 factors extracted at Eigenvalue = $1.725 > 1$ and the total variance extracted is $63.378\% > 60\%$. The factor weight of the observed variables of scales in groups 1 and 2 is $> .50$. The Com2 variable has a factor weight of $.381 < .50$ so this variable is eliminated. Also, the observed variables of the two groups had a factor weighting difference between the factor weight of that variable and other factors $> .30$. Therefore, the scale values of concepts in groups 1 and 2 are satisfactory.

After the preliminary assessment, there is one observed variable Com2 removed. Therefore, the remaining 35 observed variables were used in official quantitative research.

Official assessment: Results of assessing the reliability of 9 scales (Tr, Co, Sa, Pq, Dq, Mi, Com, Pi, Vi) are equal to Cronbach alpha coefficients. The scales in a formal research ensure reliability, with coefficients $\alpha > .60$ and greater than the coefficient α in the preliminary study. The correlation coefficient of the total observed variables is $> .30$. Thus, these scales achieve reliability.

In the preliminary study, due to the small sample size ($n = 136$), it is recommended to use the scale value scale for each scale group and according to the perpendicular rotation (Varimax). In the official study, larger sample sizes ($n = 560$) should use EFA to evaluate scales at the same time and use Promax rotation. Because Promax reflects a more accurate data structure than Varimax (Gerbing & Anderson, 1988), and is a popular method for running SEM models (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010).

EFA results of the scales in the official study have 9 factors extracted at Eigenvalue = $1.027 > 1$ and the total variance extracted (TVE) is $64.391\% > 60\%$. This indicates that scales explain concepts well. The factor weight of the variables in the 9 scales is $> .50$. Particularly observed variable Tr5 has a factor weight of $.448 < .50$; Mi1 variable has a factor weight of $.486 < .50$; Com5 variable has a factor weight of $.478 < .50$. So 3 variables: Tr5, Mi1, and Com5 are excluded. The observed variables have a factor weight difference between the factor weight of that variable and other factors $> .30$. Therefore, the scale value of these concepts is satisfactory.

The official evaluation results have removed 3 unobserved observations in the scales. Specifically, the variables: Tr5, Mi1, and Com5. According to Table 3, 32 observed variables are in satisfactory scales and are included in the test in the following methods.

Table 3

Official assessment results - reliability and value of the scale

Encoded	Items	α	λ
	Trust , $\alpha = .873$		
Tr1	<i>Manufacturers always keep their promises.</i>	.846	.627
Tr2	<i>Manufacturers always care about our business situation.</i>	.843	.793
Tr3	<i>Manufacturers always consider our benefit as well as their benefit.</i>	.840	.937
Tr4	<i>We believe that manufacturers always think of our benefit.</i>	.848	.691
	Commitment , $\alpha = .861$		
Co1	<i>We are well – conducted commitments with the manufacturer.</i>	.841	.712
Co2	<i>The relationship with manufacturers is really important to our business.</i>	.814	.852
Co3	<i>The relationship with manufacturers helps us to sustain our business activities in the long term.</i>	.806	.886
Co4	<i>The relationship between us and our manufacturers is sustainable.</i>	.832	.625
	Satisfaction , $\alpha = .906$		
Sa1	<i>The decision of doing business with our manufacturers is the right decision.</i>	.885	.791
Sa2	<i>We are very satisfied with our manufacturers.</i>	.870	.918
Sa3	<i>We are very happy with those things that the manufacturers do for us.</i>	.869	.896
Sa4	<i>If things begin again, we still choose our manufacturers.</i>	.891	.734
	Product quality , $\alpha = .841$		
Pq1	<i>Manufacturers always supply a high-quality product to us.</i>	.786	.814
Pq2	<i>Manufacturers always satisfy our quality standards.</i>	.743	.882
Pq3	<i>Their products are reliable.</i>	.808	.690
	Delivery quality , $\alpha = .879$		
Dq1	<i>Manufacturers always satisfy our delivery progress.</i>	.832	.786
Dq2	<i>We rarely have delivery errors with the manufacturers.</i>	.821	.833
Dq3	<i>Delivery is always accurate in terms of time, volume, and types of goods.</i>	.832	.811
	Market information , $\alpha = .837$		
Mi2	<i>Manufacturers help us to introduce our new products/services to our customers.</i>	.760	.829
Mi3	<i>Manufacturers help us to track changes in our market share.</i>	.767	.865

Encoded	Items	α	λ
Mi4	<i>Manufacturers allow us to quickly adjust the selling price when market fluctuation happens.</i>	.757	.861
	Communication , $\alpha = .885$		
Com1	<i>Manufacturers often contact us.</i>	.855	.755
Com3	<i>Manufacturers provide us useful information.</i>	.834	.917
Com4	<i>Manufacturers often warn us about changes, which can affect us.</i>	.844	.780
	Personal interaction , $\alpha = .878$		
Pi1	<i>We work with manufacturers easily.</i>	.852	.751
Pi2	<i>We interact well with the representative of the manufacturer.</i>	.846	.826
Pi3	<i>We solve problems with each other easily.</i>	.824	.908
Pi4	<i>We discuss openly with each other.</i>	.850	.757
	Visit , $\alpha = .828$		
Vi1	<i>Manufacturers ask their employees to visit us once every month.</i>	.784	.729
Vi2	<i>Manufacturers often ask their employees to visit us.</i>	.740	.936
Vi3	<i>Sometimes the manufacturer's director visits us.</i>	.819	.564
Vi4	<i>Visiting helps us more tightly corporate.</i>	.785	.596

Source: Author's synthesis

4.2. Testing scale

Figure 2 shows the results of the CFA (standardized) scale analysis of factors affecting three components of RQ, with the following indicators: Chi-square / df = 2.112 < 3; df = 428; P = .000; GFI = .906; TLI = .951 and CFI = .958 are all > .90; RMSEA = .045 ≤ .08. These indicators are satisfactory, so the theoretical model is suitable for market data.

Table 4 shows that the composite reliability (CR) of concepts is > 0.7, and the average variance extracted (AVE) is both > 0.5. Consequently, the concepts are satisfactory for aggregate reliability and deduction. The MSV (Maximum Shared Variance) and ASV (Average Shared Variance) indexes of concepts are smaller than the AVE index. Thus, the concepts reach differentiated values. According to Figure 2, the standardized regression coefficients of the observed variables are > .50 and all p = .000 values. Therefore, the observed variables are convergent.

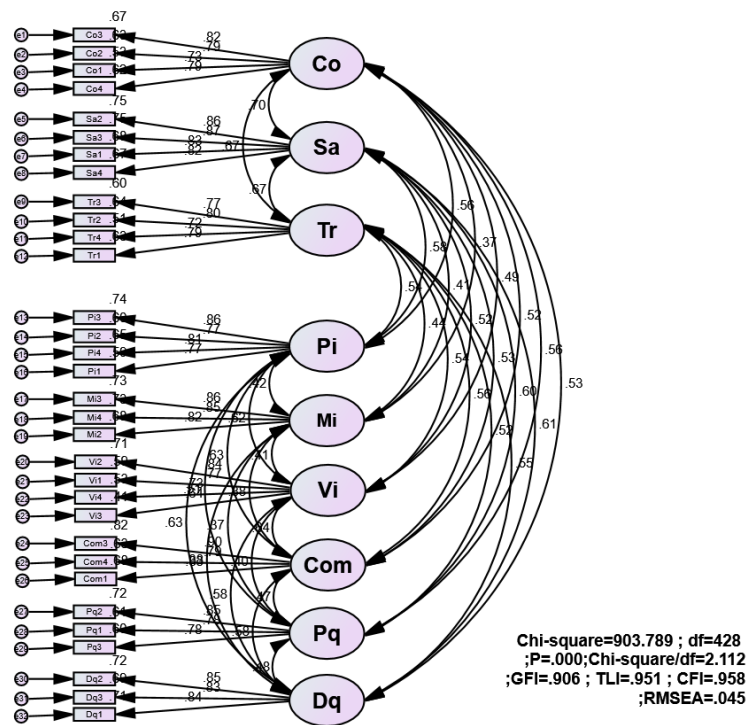


Figure 2. CFA results (standardized)

Table 4

CFA results of the scales

Scales	CR	AVE	MSV	ASV
Commitment	0.863	0.612	0.494	0.312
Satisfaction	0.908	0.712	0.494	0.341
Trust	0.854	0.594	0.452	0.321
Personal interaction	0.878	0.644	0.401	0.319
Market information	0.882	0.713	0.196	0.158
Visit	0.835	0.560	0.416	0.284
Communication	0.880	0.710	0.416	0.297
Product quality	0.844	0.644	0.364	0.247
Delivery quality	0.879	0.708	0.392	0.299

Source: CFA analysis results of the author

4.3. Results of theoretical and hypothetical testing - discussion

Verification of theoretical models: Figure 3 presents the results of SEM (standardized) theoretical models of factors affecting three components of RQ, with the indexes: Chi-square / df = 2.389 < 3; df = 431; P = .000; GFI = .894 > .80 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988); TLI = .939 and CFI = .947 are all > .90; RMSEA = .050 ≤ .08. These indicators are satisfactory, so the theoretical model is compatible with market data.

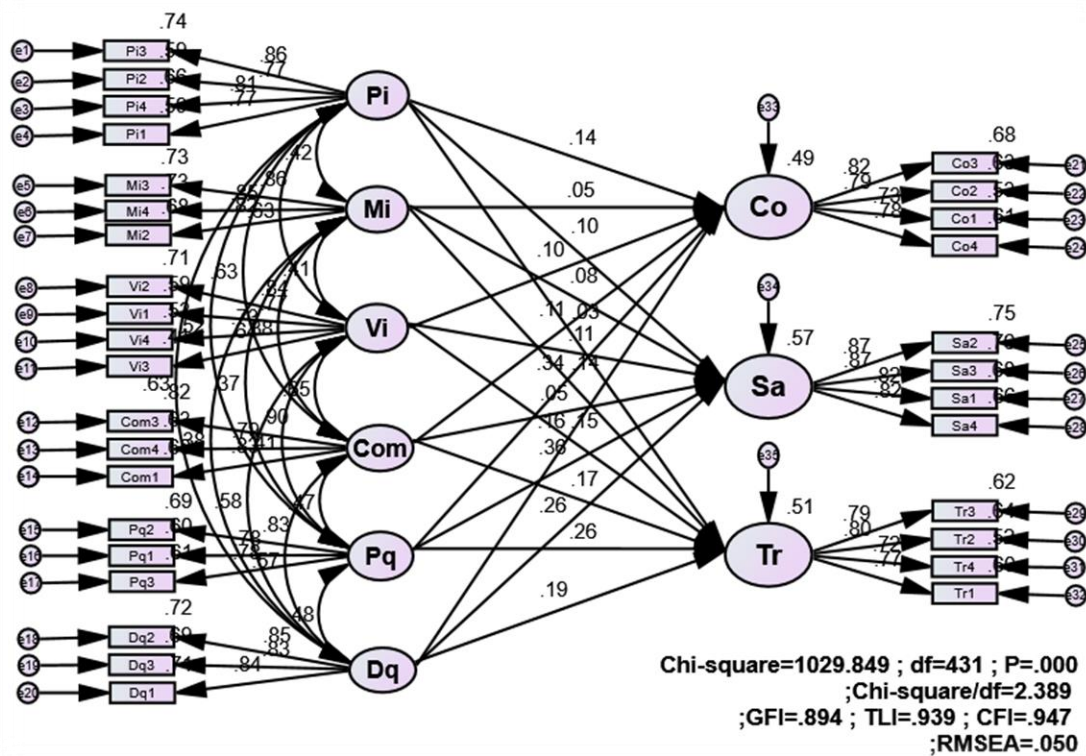


Figure 3. SEM results (standardized)

Testing hypotheses: The results of SEM testing relationships in the model are presented in Table 5. The Estimate of the concepts is positive, so the relationships impact positively. Of the 18 hypotheses of the model, there are 14 suitable and accepted hypotheses. In which, 11 hypotheses are accepted at the statistical significance level of 5% ($p < .05$), including H1a, H2a, H3a, H4a, H6a, H1b, H2b, H5b, H1c, H2c, and H3c), 3 The hypothesis is accepted at 10% statistical significance ($p < .1$), including H4b, H5c, and H6c, 4 inappropriate hypotheses (including H5a, H3b, H6b, and H4c). As follows:

Hypothesis H1a ($\lambda = 0.263, p \leq .001$) is accepted at 5% statistical significance. This means that the higher the quality of the manufacturer, the more confident the distributor believes in the manufacturer. Hypothesis H2a ($\lambda = 0.186, p \leq .01$) is accepted at a statistically significant level of 5%. With the meaning that the manufacturer ensures the timely and accurate delivery of products and goods, the distributor is more confident in the manufacturer. Hypothesis H3a ($\lambda = 0.143, p \leq .01$) is accepted at 5% statistical significance. It means that the manufacturer provides market information for full and appropriate distributor, the distributor will trust much on the publisher. Hypothesis H4a ($\lambda = 0.171, p \leq .01$) is accepted at a statistically significant level of 5%. In the sense that the manufacturer communicates well with the distributor, the distributor is more confident of the manufacturer. Hypothesis H5a ($\lambda = 0.029, p = .641 > .1$) is not accepted. This means that although the manufacturer interacts very well with the distributor, the two parties have not trusted each other. Hypothesis H6a ($\lambda = 0.146, p \leq .05$) is accepted at a statistically significant level of 5%. This means that the manufacturer regularly visits the distributor, the distributor will trust the manufacturer more.

Table 5

Hypothesis testing results

Hypothesis	Items	λ	P - value	Results
H1a (+)	Product quality → Trust	.263	***	Accepted
H2a (+)	Delivery quality → Trust	.186	.001	Accepted
H3a (+)	Market information → Trust	.143	.001	Accepted
H4a (+)	Communication → Trust	.171	.004	Accepted
H5a (+)	Personal interaction → Trust	.029	.641	Rejected
H6a (+)	Visit → Trust	.146	.018	Accepted
H1b (+)	Product quality → Commitment	.339	***	Accepted
H2b (+)	Delivery quality → Commitment	.156	.006	Accepted
H3b (+)	Market information → Commitment	.049	.268	Rejected
H4b (+)	Communication → Commitment	.106	.076	Accepted
H5b (+)	Personal interaction → Commitment	.143	.023	Accepted
H6b (+)	Visit → Commitment	.098	.111	Rejected
H1c (+)	Product quality → Satisfaction	.363	***	Accepted
H2c (+)	Delivery quality → Satisfaction	.255	***	Accepted
H3c (+)	Market information → Satisfaction	.084	.037	Accepted
H4c (+)	Communication → Satisfaction	.054	.314	Rejected
H5c (+)	Personal interaction → Satisfaction	.098	.085	Accepted
H6c (+)	Visit → Satisfaction	.107	.056	Accepted

Source: Author's synthesis

Hypothesis H1b ($\lambda = 0.339$, $p \leq .001$) is accepted at 5% statistical significance. It means that the higher the quality of the product, the better the distributor fulfills the commitments with the publisher. Hypothesis H2b ($\lambda = 0.156$, $p \leq .01$) is accepted at a statistically significant level of 5%. With the meaning that the manufacturer ensures the timely and accurate delivery of products and goods, the distributor will perform well on the commitment to the manufacturer. Hypothesis H3b ($\lambda = 0.049$, $p = .268 > .1$) is not accepted. It means that although the manufacturer provides an information center for the distributor fully, appropriately, and accurately, it is not sure that the distributor has well implemented its commitments to the publisher. Hypothesis H4b ($\lambda = 0.106$, $p \leq .1$) is accepted at the 10% statistical significance level. With the meaning that the manufacturer communicates well with the distributor, the distributor is better at fulfilling its commitments with the publisher. Hypothesis H5b ($\lambda = 0.143$, $p \leq .05$) is accepted at a statistically significant level of 5%. This means that the manufacturer interacts personally with the distributor, the better the distributor fulfills the commitments with the manufacturer. Hypothesis H6b ($\lambda = 0.098$, $p = .111 > .1$) is not accepted. In the sense that although the manufacturer enhances the visit to the distributor, it is unlikely that the distributor has done well with its commitments to the manufacturer.

Hypothesis H1c ($\lambda = 0.363$, $p \leq .001$) is accepted at 5% statistical significance. It means that the higher the quality of the product, the better the distributor is satisfied with the

manufacturer. Hypothesis H2c ($\lambda = 0.255$, $p \leq .001$) is accepted at 5% statistical significance. With the meaning that the manufacturer ensures the delivery of products and goods for the distributor timely and accurately, the distributor is more satisfied with the manufacturer. Hypothesis H3c ($\lambda = 0.084$, $p \leq .05$) is accepted at a statistically significant level of 5%. With the meaning that the manufacturer ensures the provision of the information center for the distributor timely and accurately, the distributor is more satisfied with the manufacturer. Hypothesis H4c ($\lambda = 0.054$, $p = .314 > .1$) is not accepted. It means that although the manufacturer communicates well with the distributor, it is not sure that the distributor is satisfied with the manufacturer. Hypothesis H5c ($\lambda = 0.098$, $p \leq .1$) is accepted at a statistically significant 10% level. With the meaning that the manufacturer interacts personally with the distributor, the distributor is more satisfied with the manufacturer. Hypothesis H6c ($\lambda = 0.107$, $p \leq .1$) is accepted at the 10% statistical significance level. This means that the manufacturer enhances the visit to the distributor, the more satisfied the distributor is with the manufacturer.

4.4. Discussion on research results

Discuss hypotheses compared to previous studies: The appropriate H1 (a,b,c) hypothesis should be accepted and similar to the H2 hypothesis: "Product quality has a positive effect on relationship value" in the research of T. D. Nguyen and T. T. M. Nguyen (2011, p. 319). Because relationship value is a precursor to RQ and is the behavior result of relationship marketing (Ulaga & Eggert, 2006, p. 322), therefore, the product quality hypothesis has a positive effect on relationship value, which also means that product quality will have a positive impact on RQ.

The appropriate H2 (a,b,c) hypothesis should be accepted and similar to the H4 hypothesis: "Delivery performance has a positive effect on relationship value" in the study of T. D. Nguyen and T. T. M. Nguyen (2011, p. 320).

H3 Hypothesis: H3b is unsatisfactory so it is rejected. Appropriate H3a and H3c Hypothesis should be accepted and can be considered similar to the H1 hypothesis: Market information systems are positively related to business performance, in the research of Sabherwal and Chan (2001). Because business performance is the result of RQ (Alejandro, Souza, Boles, Ribeiro, & Monteiro, 2011, p. 39), therefore, the market information system has a positive impact on business performance, which means that the market information system has a positive impact on RQ.

In addition, the study of T. D. Nguyen and T. T. M. Nguyen (2011, p. 320) has the H3 hypothesis: "Information support has a positive effect on relationship value".

Therefore, the H3a and H3c hypotheses of this study can be similar to the hypothesis of information support in the study of T. D. Nguyen and T. T. M. Nguyen (2011).

In the H4 hypothesis: H4a and H4b are consistent and like the H2 hypothesis: "The greater the manufacturer's communication, the greater the economic satisfaction of the distributor" in the research of Rodríguez-del-Bosque et al. (2006, p. 668). The H4c hypothesis is similar to the H1 hypothesis: "The greater the manufacturer's communication, the greater the non-economic satisfaction of the distributor" in the research of Rodríguez-del-Bosque et al. (2006, p. 668). However, both hypotheses were rejected, the H4c hypothesis was excluded in this study and the H1 hypothesis was rejected in the study of Rodríguez-del-Bosque et al. (2006). Also, research of Tohidinia and Haghghi (2011, p. 244) has the H4 hypothesis: "There is a significant positive relationship between communication and relationship quality", but the results are excluded. Thus, the H4c hypothesis is similar to the H4 hypothesis in the research of Tohidinia and Haghghi (2011).

H5 Hypothesis: H5a failed and is rejected. H5b and H5c are consistent and like the H5 hypothesis: "Personal interaction has a positive effect on relationship value" in the study of T. D. Nguyen and T. T. M. Nguyen (2011, p. 320).

H6 Hypothesis: H6b is unsatisfactory so it is rejected. H6a Hypothesis: Visits have a positive impact on trust between manufacturers and distributors. H6c: Visits have a positive impact on satisfaction between producers and distributors. These two hypotheses, after being appropriately tested and meet the requirements, the H6a and H6c hypotheses have not been found in previous studies. These are two new hypotheses discovered and supplemented in qualitative research of the thesis.

Discuss the contribution of research: Theoretically, this study has considered new contributions such as discovering the "visit" scale in qualitative research. Through reliability assessment, value evaluation, scale testing, suitable results, and acceptance. Because the visit is an equally important element in business strategy and tactics of the enterprise (Baldoquin de la Pena et al., 2014, p. 333). Researches in the past time just mentioned the need for visiting customers, considering visiting customers at the level of planning, visit schedules. There are no research documents on the scale of "visit" affecting RQ. On the other hand, the visit is one of the customs of Asian culture. Therefore, it can be considered that "visit" is a specific factor of the business culture of Asian culture. Additionally, the Theory of Planned Behavior can be used to explain the visit factor. Because, Theory of Planned Behavior is often used to predict intentions and behaviors in the areas of marketing and consumer behavior (Han, Hsu, & Sheu, 2010; Lam & Hsu, 2004). The manufacturer intends to visit the distributor to help both parties understand each other better. Distributors sense that the manufacturer cares about them, so they trust the manufacturer. The distributor's requirements for the manufacturer are met so they are satisfied with the manufacturer so that the commitments between the two parties can be fulfilled. Therefore, visit is a new factor affecting the components of quality of the manufacturer-distributor relationship.

The research results of the thesis have the theoretical contributions inherited from the previous studies as follows:

Firstly, research results have developed a market information scale based on the market information system factor of Sabherwal and Chan (2001). Through reliability assessment, value evaluation, scale testing, suitable results, and acceptance. Therefore, market information is an inherited scale and a factor affecting the quality of the manufacturer-distributor relationship in the context of the plastic industry in Vietnam.

Second, the three scales of product quality, delivery quality and personal interaction are derived from researches of relationship value (T. D. Nguyen & T. T. M. Nguyen, 2011) were tested in the research model of manufacturer-distributor relationship in plastic industry in Vietnam, the results are consistent and accepted.

According to T. D. Nguyen and T. T. M. Nguyen (2011, p. 393), product quality is an important factor that creates value for a business relationship. In the manufacturer-distributor relationship, the distributor maintains a relationship with the manufacturer to always have high quality and reliable products (Ulaga, 2003). If the manufacturer provides the distributor with high-quality products, it will help the distributor reduce the costs of resolving the customer's complaints, thus increasing the value of the relationship (Cannon & Homburg, 2001). Delivery quality is also a potential factor to increase the value of the manufacturer-distributor relationship (T. D. Nguyen and T. T. M. Nguyen, 2011, p. 395). Manufacturers deliver goods in the right quantities, specifications, and types will help distributors save time and unnecessary procedures, contributing

to increasing relationship value between manufacturers - distributors (Ulaga, 2003). In addition, improving the personal interaction between manufacturers - distributors will benefit both parties because they are easier to communicate with each other and increase mutual understanding in a relationship, make it more convenient to solve business problems (Cater & Cater, 2010; Ulaga, 2003). Therefore, personal interaction impacts the same direction on relationship value (T. D. Nguyen & T. T. M. Nguyen, 2011, p. 396).

The above arguments show that product quality, delivery quality and personal interaction are the three factors that impact the same direction on the relationship value, increasing the value of the relationship between manufacturer and distributor. In this study, the above three factors are considered to be inherited from previous studies, and positively impact the components of RQ. Contribute to prove the argument of Ulaga & Eggert (2006, p. 322): "relationship value" is the precursor of "relationship quality".

5. Conclusions, meanings, and limitations

The relationship quality between manufacturers and distributors in the plastic industry in Vietnam is a multidimensional concept, consisting of three components: trust, commitment, and satisfaction. The six factors that influence the components of relationship quality are product quality, delivery quality, market information, communication, personal interaction, and visits. In particular, visit is a newly discovered factor. This is a unique factor of the business culture of Asian culture. The market information factor is a scale inherited from the research of Sabherwal and Chan (2001) and is a factor affecting the quality of the manufacturer-distributor relationship in the context of the plastics industry in Vietnam. The three factors product quality, delivery quality and personal interaction are considered inherited from previous studies, and impact the same direction on the components of RQ. Contribute to demonstrate relationship value is the precursor to relationship quality.

To improve the quality of relationships with distributors, manufacturers, need to care about building trust, fulfilling commitments, and meeting the requirements of distributors. Manufacturers need to pay attention to product quality, enhance technical improvements to enhance product quality. Next, manufacturers must pay attention to the delivery, providing enough market information for distributors. In addition, the manufacturer needs to improve communication, personal interaction, and frequent visits to distributors.

This research considers the composition of RQ, factors affecting the composition of quality relationships between manufacturers and distributors in Ho Chi Minh City, the western provinces and some southeast provinces and from the perspective of the distributor, other markets (such as the Central and the Northern) and interviews with other subjects such as manufacturers, suppliers of raw materials, etc... will bring different results in terms of ingredients of RQ and factors that influence the composition of RQ. This issue opens the next research direction.

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