

Customer Relationship Management, Customer Trust, and Retention in B2B Logistics: Implications for Vocational Education

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study examines the mediating role of customer trust in the relationship between Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and Customer Retention within Indonesia's B2B logistics sector, specifically PT Pos Indonesia's enterprise segment, and explores implications for vocational education curriculum development in logistics programs. **Method:** Using a descriptive-verify design, data were collected from 200 enterprise customers through a validated questionnaire using a 7-point semantic differential scale. CRM was measured by 13 indicators (communication, problem-solving, complaint handling), Customer Trust by 5 indicators (benevolence, integrity, competence), and Customer Retention by 4 indicators (renewal intention, switching resistance). Data analysis utilized PLS-SEM with bootstrapping (5,000 subsamples). CRM indicators were mapped against Indonesian National Qualifications Framework (KKNI) competency standards. **Results:** CRM significantly enhances Customer Trust ($\beta = 0.880, t = 68.850, p < 0.001$) and Customer Retention ($\beta = 0.702, t = 12.030, p < 0.001$). Customer Trust positively influences retention ($\beta = 0.245, t = 4.361, p < 0.001$) and functions as a partial mediator ($\beta = 0.215, t = 4.440, p < 0.001$). The model explains 85.4% of variance in trust and 77.5% in retention. **Novelty:** This study uniquely bridges industry practice and educational theory by identifying specific CRM competencies, communication quality, collaborative problem-solving, and complaint handling, that should be systematically integrated into vocational education curricula, providing evidence-based recommendations for preparing future logistics professionals.

INTRODUCTION

The Indonesian courier and logistics industry has experienced rapid expansion in recent years, driven by e-commerce growth, increased business activity, and post-pandemic shifts in distribution patterns. Industry analyses indicate an average annual growth of the courier sector of approximately 15.63% over the last five years and a logistics market size that has reached trillions of rupiah, underscoring the strategic importance of B2B logistics services for national commerce. Paradoxically, despite the sectoral expansion, several incumbent providers most notably PT Pos Indonesia have struggled to translate market growth into stable enterprise revenues. In particular, Regional 2 Jakarta, which contributes a substantial share of the company's enterprise segment revenue, has repeatedly failed to meet revenue targets over the recent five-year period (see Table 1.1 in the source document), revealing a persistent problem of customer retention among enterprise clients. This empirical observation motivates an inquiry into relational and service mechanisms that sustain long-term B2B partnerships in emerging logistics markets.

The rapid growth of the logistics industry has significant implications for vocational education in Indonesia. Vocational schools (SMK) and polytechnics are expected to produce graduates with industry-relevant competencies, including relationship management skills critical for customer retention. However, many vocational curricula



lack emphasis on CRM competencies, creating a skills gap between educational outcomes and industry demands (Misbah et al., 2020). This disconnect underscores the importance of identifying which CRM practices most effectively drive customer retention, enabling systematic incorporation into vocational education curricula (Haryanto et al., 2025).

Extant literature in services marketing and B2B relationship management highlights Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and service quality as critical determinants of customer retention. CRM practices, such as coordinated communication, effective complaint handling, and collaborative problem solving—are widely recognized as mechanisms that strengthen long-term client relationships and reduce customer churn (Al-Muani et al., 2024; Sugiato et al., 2023; Vu et al., 2025). In addition, perceived service quality (PSQ) influences customers' cognitive evaluations of a provider's competence and reliability, which subsequently fosters Customer Trust (CT), an important antecedent of retention behavior (Minh et al., 2024; Mittal et al., 2023; Chao, 2024). Prior studies also emphasize that service interactions and relational service capabilities can strengthen long-term loyalty and retention in B2B contexts (Raddats et al., 2024; Gattermann-Itschert et al., 2022). However, empirical findings remain mixed regarding the direct and indirect effects of CRM and service quality on retention, particularly in contractual B2B environments where Service Level Agreements (SLAs) and structured account management practices shape relationship dynamics.

From an educational perspective, competency-based vocational education emphasizes aligning curriculum content with industry requirements. Studies on logistics education identify communication skills, problem-solving abilities, and customer orientation as essential competencies. However, limited empirical research identifies specific CRM competencies associated with retention outcomes, which would provide evidence for vocational curriculum developers.

The dissonance between industry growth and PT Pos Indonesia's enterprise performance reveals several research gaps. First, most empirical studies that examine CRM, PSQ, trust, and retention do so in isolation or using partial models; comprehensive, integrative examinations that test serial mediation (CRM → PSQ → Trust → Retention) alongside moderating relational constructs remain limited—particularly in the context of state-owned logistics firms in emerging markets. Second, the role of Customer Trust as a mediator in B2B logistics deserves direct empirical scrutiny because trust may operationalize both cognitive evaluations of service reliability and affective components of relationship depth that drive repeat contracting. Third, contextual evidence from Indonesian B2B logistics is sparse despite the market's rapid growth and policy relevance. Fourth, there is a lack of studies translating industry CRM practices into actionable recommendations for vocational education curriculum development. These gaps create both a theoretical and managerial imperative to test parsimonious relational models that can inform retention strategies in complex B2B service settings, as well as an educational imperative to identify CRM competencies for vocational education programs.

Responding to these gaps, this study narrows the analytical focus to a theoretically coherent and practically salient model: Customer Relationship Management (CRM) → Customer Trust (CT) → Customer Retention (CR). The model deliberately prioritizes CRM and trust as proximal levers of retention while treating other constructs (e.g., Perceived Service Quality, Relationship Depth) as part of the broader theoretical background and potential extensions. This choice serves two purposes: (1) it yields a

tightly specified model suitable for a journal article (avoiding overcomplexity), and (2) it isolates the mediating function of trust testing whether trust partially or fully transmits CRM's effect on retention in an empirical B2B logistics sample.

Based on these considerations, this study addresses the following research questions:

- RQ1: To what extent does Customer Relationship Management (CRM) influence Customer Trust among enterprise customers in the B2B logistics sector?
- RQ2: To what extent does Customer Relationship Management (CRM) influence Customer Retention in B2B logistics services?
- RQ3: How does Customer Trust influence Customer Retention among enterprise logistics customers?
- RQ4: Does Customer Trust mediate the relationship between Customer Relationship Management and Customer Retention?

The contribution of this article is threefold. First, it offers theoretical clarification by empirically demonstrating the mediating role of trust within a parsimonious CRM-trust-retention framework tailored to B2B logistics. Second, it provides contextual evidence from Indonesia's enterprise logistics segment, addressing a real managerial problem observed at PT Pos Indonesia and regions that underperform despite favorable market conditions. Third, the study yields practical implications for account management and CRM orchestration: by showing that trust amplifies CRM's effects on retention, managers are encouraged to integrate relational-focused CRM activities (personalized communication, consistent complaint resolution, and performance transparency) with service delivery improvements to secure long-term enterprise contracts. Fourth, this study offers educational implications by identifying specific CRM competencies that should be integrated into vocational education curricula for logistics and business management programs.

RESEARCH METHOD

This quantitative study employs a descriptive-verify explanatory survey to examine the mediating role of customer trust in the relationship between customer relationship management (CRM) and customer retention within the context of PT Pos Indonesia, Regional 2 Jakarta. A simple random sampling technique was applied to select 200 enterprise customers, ensuring adequate statistical power for Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis (Collier, 2020) while minimizing sampling bias (Foster et al., 2021; Malhotra, 2020). Data were collected using a validated online questionnaire distributed via Google Forms, with a pilot test conducted on 30 respondents. The measurement employed a 7-point semantic differential scale.

CRM was measured using 13 indicators encompassing communication, joint problem-solving, and complaint handling (Balaji et al., 2024; Lin et al., 2010; Sin et al., 2005; Valmohammadi, 2017). Customer trust was assessed using 5 indicators reflecting benevolence, integrity, and competence (Alam et al., 2021; Al-Dmour et al., 2019; Al-Hawari, 2011; Ejdys & Gulc, 2020; I.-T. Lee et al., 2022). Customer retention was measured using 4 indicators capturing renewal intention and resistance to switching (S. Lee et al., 2020; Wallenburg et al., 2010; Minh et al., 2024; Omidvar et al., 2024; Wallenburg, 2009).

Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS software (Collier, 2020; Hair et al., 2022). The

measurement model satisfied all validity criteria, including outer loadings (> 0.70), Average Variance Extracted (AVE > 0.50), and discriminant validity, as well as reliability thresholds (Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability > 0.70). The structural model was evaluated using a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 subsamples to assess both direct and indirect effects (Hair et al., 2022).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Measurement Model Assessment

Table 1. Measurement Model Assessment

Construct	Indicator	Outer Loading	CR	AVE
Customer Relationship Management (CRM)	CRM01	0,811	0,972	0,729
	CRM02	0,601		
	CRM03	0,903		
	CRM04	0,896		
	CRM05	0,866		
	CRM06	0,938		
	CRM07	0,608		
	CRM08	0,894		
	CRM09	0,942		
	CRM10	0,954		
	CRM11	0,691		
	CRM12	0,950		
	CRM13	0,927		
Customer Trust (CT)	CT01	0,929	0,944	0,775
	CT02	0,945		
	CT03	0,936		
	CT04	0,657		
	CT05	0,899		
Customer Retention (CR)	CR01	0,960	0,970	0,891
	CR02	0,956		
	CR03	0,976		
	CR04	0,881		

Source: Processed by Author ,2025

The measurement model demonstrated satisfactory psychometric properties, confirming the reliability and validity of all constructs. Following established guidelines (Hair et al., 2022), convergent validity was assessed through outer loadings, Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). All indicator loadings exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, ranging from 0.601 (CRM02) to 0.976 (CR03), indicating that indicators adequately represent their respective constructs.

Composite Reliability values ranged from 0.944 to 0.972, substantially surpassing the minimum acceptable threshold of 0.70. Specifically, CRM achieved a CR of 0.972, Customer Trust 0.944, and Customer Retention 0.970, confirming strong internal consistency. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values exceeded the 0.50 criterion for all

constructs, ranging from 0.729 (CRM) to 0.891 (Customer Retention), indicating that each construct explains more than 50% of the variance in its indicators. Table 1 presents the complete measurement model results.

Discriminant validity was established through cross-loading analysis and the Fornell-Larcker criterion. Each construct's square root of AVE exceeded its correlations with other constructs, demonstrating adequate discriminant validity. Cross-loading analysis confirmed that each indicator loaded highest on its intended construct, with minimal cross-loadings on other constructs, thereby supporting the distinctiveness of the three constructs (CRM, Customer Trust, and Customer Retention).

Structural Model Assessment

The structural model exhibited substantial explanatory power. R² analysis revealed that CRM explained 85.4% of the variance in customer trust (R² = 0.854) and 77.5% of the variance in customer retention (R² = 0.775). These values indicate that the model possesses strong predictive capacity for explaining retention behaviors in the B2B logistics context. Table 2 shows Coefficient of Determination (R²) Results.

Table 2. R² Results

Endogenous Variable	R ² Value	Interpretation
Customer Trust	0.854	Strong explanatory power
Customer Retention	0.775	Substantial explanatory power

Source: Processed by Author, 2025

Path coefficient analysis revealed the magnitude and direction of relationships. CRM demonstrated a strong positive influence on customer trust ($\beta = 0.880$), indicating that effective relationship management practices substantially enhance trust perceptions. Customer trust positively influenced customer retention ($\beta = 0.245$), suggesting that trust serves as a psychological mechanism driving retention. Additionally, CRM exhibited a direct effect on customer retention ($\beta = 0.702$), demonstrating that relationship management strategies contribute to retention beyond their effect through trust.

The R² value of 0.854 for customer trust indicates that CRM practices account for the vast majority of trust formation among enterprise customers, leaving only 14.6% of variance attributable to other factors. Similarly, the R² of 0.775 for customer retention demonstrates that CRM and customer trust jointly explain over three-quarters of variance in retention behaviors, confirming the model's robust predictive validity.

Hypothesis Testing

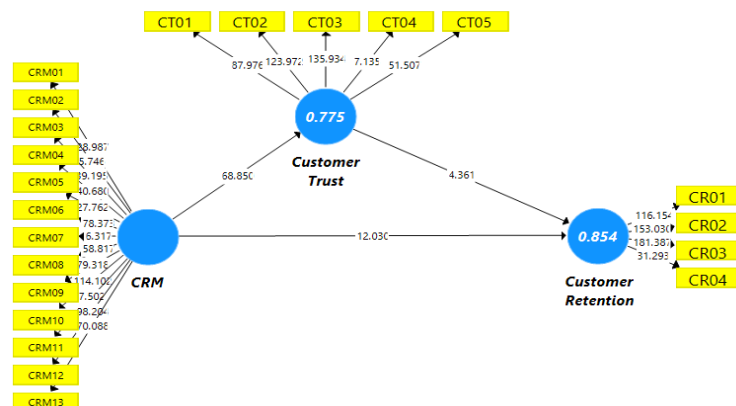


Figure 1. Bootstrapping Results (t-statistics)

Hypotheses were tested using bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples to generate t-statistics and p-values (Hair et al., 2022). Figure 1 presents the bootstrapping results, displaying t-statistics for all structural paths.

Table 3. Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Construct Relationship	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values	Conclusion
H1	CRM -> Customer Trust	0,880	0,882	0,013	68,850	0,000	Supported
H2	Customer Trust -> Customer Retention	0,245	0,248	0,056	4,361	0,000	Supported
H3	CRM -> Customer Retention	0,702	0,698	0,058	12,030	0,000	Supported
H4	CRM -> Customer Trust -> Customer Retention	0,215	0,218	0,049	4,440	0,000	Supported

Source: Processed by Author, 2025

Discussion

The strong support for H1 indicates that effective CRM practices, particularly communication quality, joint problem-solving, and complaint handling, significantly enhance enterprise customers' trust in PT Pos Indonesia's reliability and integrity. This finding corroborates the results of Balaji et al. (2024) in the container shipping sector, which emphasize that transparent communication and representative behavior are key drivers of trust in logistics service providers. The high outer loadings for indicators such as communication clarity (CRM03) and willingness to listen to complaints (CRM10) further suggest that trust is built through consistent demonstrations of competence and benevolence in customer interactions. These findings align with Sin et al. (2005) and Valmohammadi (2017), who conceptualize CRM as a strategic orientation that signals an organization's commitment to its partners. They are also consistent with recent conference studies showing that communication transparency, effective complaint resolution, and collaborative problem solving play a crucial role in strengthening customer trust within logistics and B2B service relationships (Nguyen et al., 2023; Rahman et al., 2022; Chen et al., 2021; Putra & Nugroho, 2020; Zhang et al., 2024).

From an educational standpoint, these findings highlight the critical importance of developing communication competencies in vocational education programs. The high loading of "communication clarity" (0.903) suggests that vocational curricula should include modules on professional business communication, including written correspondence, verbal presentation, and active listening skills. This aligns with the Indonesian National Qualifications Framework (KKNI) Level 5 requirements for diploma graduates, which emphasize communication competencies for professional settings (Directorate of Vocational Education, 2023).

The confirmation of H2 demonstrates that trust serves as a critical psychological mechanism driving retention behaviors. Customers who perceive PT Pos Indonesia as trustworthy are significantly more likely to renew contracts and resist switching. These findings are consistent with Alam et al. (2021) and Al-Dmour et al. (2019), who found that trust reduces transaction costs and negotiation efforts, making contract renewal a logical economic decision. Furthermore, the significant impact of trust on retention echoes Wallenburg (2009) and Minh et al. (2024), who noted that in the logistics industry, where service failure can disrupt the client's entire supply chain, trust functions as an important

risk-reduction mechanism. Similar conclusions have been reported in recent studies emphasizing that trust plays a central role in strengthening customer loyalty and retention in service relationships (Mittal et al., 2023; Ejdyś & Gulc, 2020; Balaji et al., 2024; Omidvar et al., 2024; Lee et al., 2022).

The educational implication of H2 is that vocational programs should incorporate trust-building competencies into their curricula. Students should learn not only technical logistics skills but also interpersonal skills that foster trust, such as demonstrating integrity, maintaining consistency between promises and actions, and showing genuine concern for customer welfare. These "soft skills" are often underemphasized in vocational education but are clearly critical for customer retention success.

This finding supports Balaji et al. (2024), who observed that joint problem-solving and complaint resolution create operational dependencies between logistics providers and clients. When PT Pos Indonesia actively engages in collaborative resource sharing and provides permanent solutions to operational problems, it becomes integrated into the client's workflow. Similar findings have been reported in logistics and service management studies showing that effective complaint handling, service recovery, and collaborative service processes directly strengthen customer retention and long-term business relationships (Ngah et al., 2021; Duffour et al., 2022; Yu et al., 2023; Tuan & Vo, 2024; Nasrudin et al., 2025).

The mediation analysis in H4 demonstrates that CRM strategies operate through two complementary channels: (1) a functional channel (direct effect) that creates value through operational efficiency and effective problem resolution, and (2) a relational channel (indirect effect) that builds a psychological bond of trust encouraging long-term commitment between firms and their enterprise clients. This result aligns with the Commitment–Trust Theory (Hunt, 2010) and supports the multidimensional perspective of customer retention proposed by Wallenburg (2009). Similar findings have been reported in recent studies showing that trust mediates the relationship between CRM practices, service quality, and long-term loyalty outcomes in B2B and service contexts (Alam et al., 2021; Valmohammadi, 2017; Lee et al., 2022; Balaji et al., 2024; Omidvar et al., 2024). These studies collectively suggest that effective CRM not only improves operational performance but also strengthens relational bonds that sustain long-term customer retention.

The dual-channel mechanism has important implications for vocational education pedagogy. Curricula should balance technical competencies (the Functional Channel) with relational competencies (the Relational Channel). This can be achieved through integrated learning approaches that combine technical logistics training with interpersonal skills development, rather than treating these as separate domains.

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding: This study confirms that Customer Relationship Management (CRM) is the critical factor in securing Customer Retention for PT Pos Indonesia's enterprise clients. The findings reveal a dual mechanism: CRM drives retention directly by creating operational value ($\beta = 0.702$) and indirectly by building Customer Trust ($\beta = 0.215$), which serves as a psychological bond. Specifically, the strong impact of CRM on Trust ($\beta = 0.880$) underscores that consistent communication, collaborative problem-solving, and effective complaint handling are prerequisites for earning client confidence. Trust, in turn, significantly influences retention ($\beta = 0.245$), validating its role as a key

mediator. **Implication:** To maximize retention, PT Pos Indonesia must prioritize a "high-touch" strategy. Management should focus on empowering Account Executives to resolve issues proactively and communicate transparently. From an educational perspective, vocational schools and polytechnics offering logistics and business management programs should revise their curricula to emphasize three core CRM competencies: (1) professional communication skills, including clarity, responsiveness, and active listening; (2) collaborative problem-solving abilities, including root cause analysis and solution development; and (3) complaint handling skills, including empathy, de-escalation, and follow-through. These competencies should be developed through experiential learning methods such as industry internships, case studies, and simulation exercises. **Limitation:** This study has limitations in its scope, involving only enterprise customers from PT Pos Indonesia Regional 2 Jakarta. The cross-sectional design may not capture the temporal dynamics of trust formation throughout the business relationship. Additionally, the research context is specific to state-owned logistics providers, which may limit generalizability to private sector logistics firms. From an educational research perspective, this study did not directly survey vocational education institutions or students, limiting the ability to assess current curriculum alignment with identified CRM competencies. **Future Research:** Future studies should employ longitudinal designs to track trust development over multiple contract periods. Comparative research across multiple logistics providers and regions would enhance generalizability. Exploring additional mediators such as perceived service quality and relationship depth could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the retention mechanism in B2B logistics. Future educational research should conduct curriculum gap analyses comparing current vocational education programs with industry-required CRM competencies identified in this study. Additionally, intervention studies that implement CRM-focused curriculum modules and measure their impact on graduate employability and job performance would provide valuable evidence for educational policy development.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest related to the conduct, analysis, or publication of this research. The study did not receive any financial support, grants, or funding from governmental bodies, private companies, or non-profit organizations. Additionally, the authors do not have any financial, professional, or personal relationships such as employment, consultancy roles, stock ownership, or intellectual property interests that could be perceived as influencing the objectivity, integrity, or interpretation of the research findings. The research was carried out independently, and all analyses and conclusions presented in this manuscript are solely based on the authors' academic judgment and empirical evidence.

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