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THE RELATIONSHIPS AMONG THEATRICAL COMPONENTS, EXPERIENTIAL VALUE, RELATIONSHIP QUALITY, AND RELATIONSHIP MARKETING OUTCOMES—A CASE OF THEME PARK IN TAIWAN

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ABSTRACT

Both marketing practitioners and academic researchers have traditionally recognized the major influence that relationship quality has on relationship marketing outcomes. Differing from the previous studies, this study proposes a more integrated model by including theatrical components and experiential value into the “relationship quality-relationship marketing outcomes” paradigm.

The structural relationships among the variables are examined by adopting a structural equation modeling (SEM) approach in a travel-related context.

The results confirm the existence of the path “theatrical components→experiential value→relationship quality→relationship marketing outcomes”. In addition, theatrical components are found to have an indirect rather than a direct effect on relationship marketing outcomes as mediated by experiential value and relationship quality.

Keywords: Theatrical components, Experiential value, Relationship quality, Relationship marketing outcomes, Theme park
The Relationships among Theatrical Components, Experiential Value, Relationship Quality, and Relationship Marketing Outcomes–A Case of Theme Park in Taiwan

INTRODUCTION

Forty decades have passed since Berry (1983) first mentioned the concept of relationship marketing. Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner and Gremler (2002) are those who initially developed an integrative model that combines the relational benefits and relationship quality perspectives and specified how they may influence the two important relationship marketing outcomes of customer loyalty and word-of-mouth communication among these concepts of relationship marketing in the services industry.

Differing from the model proposed by Hennig-Thurau et al. (2002), this study adopt experiential value instead of relationship benefits to examine the antecedents of relationship marketing outcomes (i.e., customer loyalty and word of mouth) based on the viewpoint of theater experience and develop an integrative model associated with theatrical components, experiential value, relationship quality and relationship marketing outcomes in the theme park industry.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Dramaturgical Theory and Theatrical Components

Marketing researchers use the term ‘dramaturgical’ to refer to marketers’ impression of management efforts (Goffman, 1959). Grove and Fisk (1983) and later, Grove, Fisk and Bitner (1992) developed a comprehensive framework that portrays the service encounter as drama. Grove, Fisk and Bitner (1992) offered a generic representation of service dramas that incorporates four key theatrical components: (1) actors, or the service personnel whose behaviours and presence help to determine the service, (2) audience, or the consumers who are the service recipients, (3) setting, or the physical environment in which the service occurs, and (4) performance, or the service enactment itself.

Experiential Value

Experiential value perceptions are based upon interactions involving either direct usage or distanced appreciation of goods and services (Mathwick et al., 2001, p.41).

The typology of experiential value proposed by Holbrook (1994) suggests a value landscape divided into four quadrants framed by intrinsic/extrinsic sources of value on one axis and active/reactive value on the other. Drawing upon prior research, we label these four dimensions of experiential value: consumer return on investment, service excellence, playfulness, and aesthetic appeal.

Relationship Quality

Previous research shows that the most commonly used RQ dimensions are satisfaction, trust, and commitment. (Baker, Simpson, & siguaw, 1999; Crosby, Evans, & Cowles, 1990; Dorsch, Swanson, & Kelley, 1998; Garbarino, & Johnson, 1999; Palmer, & Bejou, 1994; Smith, 1998). In line with previous studies (Crosby et al., 1990; De Wulf et al., 2001; Dwyer and Oh, 1987; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2002; Kumar et al., 1995; Lin and Ding, 2005) we consider RQ to be a second-order construct composed of the above three distinct, though related, dimensions.

Relationship Marketing Outcomes

Two dimensions are referred to in the marketing literature as key relationship marketing outcomes: customer loyalty and (positive) customer word-of-mouth communication (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2002).
METHODOLOGY

Research Framework and Hypotheses

Although theatrical components and experiential value are valuable in their own right, marketers do not yet have a clear understanding of how they relate to relationship quality and ultimately to relationship marketing outcomes. In this section, we develop an integrative model that combines the theatrical components, experiential value and relationship quality perspectives and specifies how they may influence the two important relationship marketing outcomes of customer loyalty and word-of-mouth communication. The integrative model is shown in Figure 1.

The research hypotheses supporting this model are then as follows:

H1: Theatrical components have a positive influence on experiential value.
H2: Theatrical components have a positive influence on relationship quality.
H3: Theatrical components have a positive influence on relationship marketing outcomes.
H4: Experiential value has a positive influence on relationship quality.
H5: Experiential value has a positive influence on relationship marketing outcomes.
H6: Relationship quality has a positive influence on relationship marketing outcomes.
H7: Experiential value has a mediated effect on theatrical components and relationship marketing outcomes.
H8: Relationship quality has a mediated effect on theatrical components and relationship marketing outcomes.
Questionnaire Design and Operationalisation of Constructs

The questionnaire consisted of five sections: theatrical components, experiential value, relationship quality, relationship marketing outcomes, and basic information of the respondents.

For the constructs considered, the measurement items were borrowed and modified from previous research. All of the items were measured on 5-point Likert-type scales, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) to increase ease of response.

Pilot runs of the questionnaire were conducted to forty-one and forty visitors in the Formosam Aboriginal Culture Village theme park in south-central Taiwan and the Window on China theme park in northern Taiwan, respectively. And thus a few corrections and adjustment in the wording and structure of the questionnaire were made in response to (1) respondent suggestions and (2) item-total correlation.

Sample Design and Data Collection

The visitors who were visiting Formosam Aboriginal Culture Village or Window on China theme parks at the time of the survey were considered to be the sampling framework. Questionnaires were distributed and collected by research interviewer in 2011.

Data Analysis

The proposed model was examined via structural equation modeling (SEM) using AMOS 18.0 to test both the theoretical relationships and the overall model fit.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Descriptive Statistics

The respondent profile is as follows: 66.8% of the sample was between the ages of 19 to 40 years with a slight majority of female visitors (55.0%). The demographic characteristics of respondents were consistent with the previous studies that survey in similar theme park called Jansusan Fancyworld Theme Park. For example, Ryan et al. (2010) reported that 65% of the sample was between the ages of 21 to 40. In all, 65.9% had a college degree or higher qualification. Student (18.9%), industry (15.0%), commerce industry (10.9%), and others (10.3%) were the main divisions of occupation for respondents. 25.9% of visitors was the first time to visit the theme park. 99.1% of visitors has visited any theme parks before. Most visitors were from north area and middle area (78.8%) of Taiwan.

Measurement Model

First, a Cronbach alpha test was used to determine the internal consistency for each of these four constructs. The results indicated that all four constructs were above the cut-off criterion of 0.7 recommended by Nunnally (1978). Therefore, it suggests that all constructs were well acceptably reliable.

Second, the fit indices for measurement model were tested. The fit indices suggested by Jöreskog and Sörbom (1993) and Hair et al. (1998) were used to assess the model adequacy. Indices generated by this measurement model suggest acceptable fit \( \chi^2=232.389 \) (59d.f.), \( p=0.000 \); RMSEA=0.093; GFI=0.898; CFI=0.958; N=342).

Third, the validity of the constructs was tested using the procedure recommended by Fornell and Larcker (1981). Hence, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted using AMOS 5.0 to test the convergent and discriminant validity of the constructs. This results confirms
that each construct of this study has very good convergent and discriminant validity.

Structure Model

After making sure that the internal consistency, convergent validity and discriminant validity were acceptable, the structural model that specifies the relationships between the constructs was tested. Figure 2 presents the structural diagram of the theoretical model in this study. The results showed that theatrical components significantly influenced experiential value ($\gamma=0.923; t=16.634$) and relationship quality ($\gamma=0.171; t=2.101$). However, theatrical components had no positive effect on relationship marketing outcomes ($\beta=0.251; t=1.123$). In addition, experiential value significantly affected relationship quality ($\beta=0.864; t=2.101$) and relationship marketing outcomes ($\beta=0.363; t=2.420$). Lastly, there was a significant relationship between relationship quality and relationship marketing outcomes ($\beta=0.976; t=5.492$). In addition, findings suggested that experiential value and relationship quality completely mediated the relationship between theatrical components and relationship marketing outcomes.

Figure 2. The Estimated Structural Model

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a Standardized regression coefficient with its t-value in parenthesis

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

→ Significant relationship

---- Non-significant relationship
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

In this paper, we have proposed a model that extends relationship marketing research by integrating dramaturgical theory, experiential value and relationship marketing concept into a new framework that describes the causal relations among theatrical components, experiential value, relationship quality and relationship marketing outcomes in theme park industry.

The results also largely support the relationships proposed in the integrated model. In particular, the role of experiential value and relationship quality as mediators between theatrical components and relationship marketing outcomes is generally supported by the data. Important research results are as follows:

Theatrical components were found to be a significant predictor of experiential value as well as relationship quality. However, it was an insignificant predictor to relationship marketing outcomes.

Moreover, experiential value had a significantly positive effect on relationship quality. The result is consistent with Moliner’s et al. (2007) and Uлага and Eggert’s (2006) viewpoints. That is to say, experiential value could be an important antecedent of relationship quality besides relationship benefits. Also, experiential value had a significantly positive effect on relationship marketing outcomes.

As mentioned above, theatrical components had not a significantly positive effect on relationship marketing outcomes. Our results from mediation analysis, however, reveal the important mediating role of experiential value and relationship quality in understanding theatrical components and relationship marketing outcomes. Theatrical components affect relationship marketing outcomes only through experiential value and relationship quality.

REFERENCES


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