The Impact of Idols’ Traits on Fans’ Customer Relationship Quality

Yong-dong SHI, Yun-long MA* and Jiong LIU
Macau University of Science and Technology, Road Wei Long, Macau, China
*Corresponding author

Keywords: Fans, Fashion, Maven, Interaction, Customer relationship quality.

Abstracts. The purpose of this study is to explore the impact of idols’ traits on fans’ customer relationship quality. Based on 274 respondents reporting their relationship with idols, the results has led to two intended contributions: (1) it shows that fashion, maven and interaction, which are three primary traits for idols, have positive impacts on three dimensions of customer relationship quality, which are satisfaction, trust and commitment, (2) it reveals that customer involvement has a moderating effect between interaction and customer trust. Management implications are also discussed for idols to improve the customer relationship quality.

Introduction

Fans culture has gradually developed in China since 1980s and 1990s. With the rise of fans culture, it is undeniable to focus on the consumption ability underlying fans. The report said that the economic scale of fans group is coming to exceed 2 trillion [1]. How to perfect idols’ traits and how to improve the quality of fans’ group would be the focus of the study of fans group. The objective of this study is to perfect and improve idols’ traits and the customer relationship quality on three dimensions of satisfaction, trust and commitment.

Theoretical Background and Hypotheses

In the research of Crosby [2], it refers to the overall evaluation of the strength of the customer relationship quality. However, Holmlund [3] believes that relationship quality refers to perception of dynamic quality generated by the interaction between customers, enterprises and service providers over a long period, which is lasting and continuous. Finally, based on the previous studies, Wulf [4] concluded three classic dimensions of customer relationship quality: satisfaction, trust and commitment, which are used and measured in this study.

The Impact of Fashion on Customer Relationship Quality

Fashion plays an important role in the relationship between idols and fans’ group, which is an important trait of idols. The definition used for this paper is, “A fashion is a style of consumer product or way of behaving that is temporarily adopted by a discernible proportion of members of a social group because that chosen style or behavior is perceived to be socially appropriate for the time and situation [5].” Meanwhile, Easley and Kleinberg [6] think that “The fashion context is deemed to be particularly revealing when studying social media usage, as fashion itself is known to spread through network effects.” Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis: H₁: Fashion has positive impact on three dimensions of customer relationship quality, which are satisfaction, trust and commitment. There also three sub-hypotheses: H₁₁: Fashion has positive effect on customer satisfaction; H₁₂: Fashion has positive effect on customer trust; H₁₃: Fashion has positive effect on customer commitment.

The Impact of Specialization on the Quality of Customer Relationships

The earliest research on maven, which was proposed by Dichter [7] in 1966, is that people will consciously perceive the needs of others and consult others when they need help in daily life. And Feick and Price [8] give the definition of maven, “Familiar with the information of various
products, the place where the products are purchased and other relevant information, they are very active in chatting with others about the market situation and enthusiastic to answer others’ questions”. Consultants with the traits of maven are ready to communicate information with others about products, whereas they have more professional or knowledgeable than normal consumers [9]. Hence, we hypothesize: H2: Maven has positive impacts on three dimensions of customer relationship quality, which are satisfaction, trust and commitment. The sub-hypotheses are: H₂₁: Maven has positive effect on customer satisfaction; H₂₂: Maven has positive effect on customer trust; H₂₃: Maven has positive effect on customer commitment.

**The Impact of Interaction on Customer Relationship Quality**
Rafaeli [10] believes that the latent capacity is sufficient in the process of interaction, but it still needs active guidance to realize the process. Wu [11] defined interaction as the media that can control the degree of the interaction process, the traits of the communicators, and the specific response in his study. Based on the research about online interaction, the level of interaction directly influences the visitors volume [12,13]. Hence, relevant hypotheses are put forward: H3: Interaction has positive impact on three dimensions of customer relationship quality, which are satisfaction, trust and commitment. The sub-hypotheses shows: H₃₁: Interaction has positive effect on customer satisfaction; H₃₂: Interaction has positive effect on customer trust; H₃₃: Interaction has positive effect on customer commitment.

**The Moderating Effect of Customer Involvement**
According to Celsi and Olson [14], the degree of customer involvement refers to the participations of customers based on their needs, values and interests, which reflect the process of making consumption decisions. Others found that if consumers involved actively in the process of services and intended to achieve benefits [15]. Consequently, the benefits of consumers and merchants in this consumption process will be enhanced. Customer involvement was also defined as the degree of personal consumption, which will have an impact on the information of related products or services held by consumers [16]. As a result, we hypothesize: H4: Customer involvement has positive moderating effect between interaction and customer trust.

**Method**

**Descriptive Statistics**
There are 350 questionnaires were distributed in this study. After removing those respondents from the sample who did not complete all questions, we retained 274 valid questionnaires (78.2% response rate) for data analysis. We detected no significant differences in the means of the constructs between those cases retained and those removed.

**Measure Development**
Likert 5-point scale was used for the measurement of variables in this study. Measures for the constructs and variables in the questionnaire, which are examined, are available in literature. The questionnaire is shown in Table1. And for each variable, only one item is shown as an example.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Items(e.g.)</th>
<th>Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fashion</td>
<td>Idols are driving market trend.</td>
<td>Hao Zhang, etc [17]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maven</td>
<td>Idols like introducing new things to fans.</td>
<td>Naresh Malhotra [18]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td>Idols will respond in fans’ groups in time.</td>
<td>Agarwal[19]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Commitment  | I have an effective communication with idols. | Crosby [2] & Robert [20]  
Involvement  | The assistance from idols is significant for me. | Crosby [2] & Robert [20]  

Results

**The Reliability Test**

Cronbach’s alpha coefficient is generally between 0 and 1 in the reliability test, the greater the alpha value shows and the higher the reliability of the questionnaire. When the value is between 0.8 and 0.9 indicates a good reliability. On the other hand, it is between 0.7 and 0.8 indicates a fairly good reliability value. The Cronbach’s Alpha values of fashion, maven, interaction are all above 0.7, the degree of customer involvement’s is above 0.8, the customer relationship quality’s is above 0.9 in this study. Above all, the reliability of this scale is relatively good.

**Correlation Analysis**

In Table 2, we report that fashion, maven and interaction have positive impact; fashion, maven and interaction have positive influence on customer relationship quality; customer involvement has positive effect on maven, and customer involvement has positive effect on customer relationship quality.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fashion</th>
<th>Maven</th>
<th>Interaction</th>
<th>Customer Involvement</th>
<th>Customer Relationship Quality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fashion</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maven</td>
<td>0.500**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td>0.459**</td>
<td>0.635**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Involvement</td>
<td>0.384**</td>
<td>0.494**</td>
<td>0.546**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Relationship Quality</td>
<td>0.53**</td>
<td>0.588**</td>
<td>0.673**</td>
<td>0.751**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Factor Analysis**

The result shows the standardized load factor values of each item are greater than 0.5, and the critical ratios is greater than 1.96, all of which are significant at the level of 0.001. In addition, the composite reliability of each factor is greater than 0.7. After the optimized and corrected of the error, the goodness of fit of the model shows that the chi-square value is 373.366, the degree of freedom is 137, and the chi-square degree of freedom ratio is 2.725. Moreover, the values of RMR and RMSEA are less than 0.08. From the discussion so far, most indexes have reached the ideal level, indicating that the confirmatory factor analysis model can fit the research data in general, with good adaptability effect and good convergence validity.

**Structural Model Evaluation**

Table 3 shows that the chi-square value of freedom is 2.882, smaller than 3. Secondly, RMR in the table is 0.047, less than 0.08, RMSEA is 0.08, and GFI is 0.869, less than 0.9, all of them reaching the general standard. Above all, the overall fitness of the model reaches the general level. After the analysis of relationships between latent constructs are in the hypothesized direction, providing
significant support for our structural model. Fashion has positive impact on three dimensions of customer relationship quality, which are satisfaction, trust and commitment; Maven has positive impact on three dimensions of customer relationship quality, which are satisfaction, trust and commitment; Interaction has positive impact on three dimensions of customer relationship quality, which are satisfaction, trust and commitment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistic Category</th>
<th>CMIN/DF</th>
<th>RMR</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
<th>GFI</th>
<th>CFI</th>
<th>IFI</th>
<th>PNFI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statistic Results</td>
<td>2.882</td>
<td>0.047</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.869</td>
<td>0.909</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>0.716</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Moderating Influence**

We test the moderating effect through SPSS 24.0, and found that interaction has a significant moderating impact on customer trust. We use interactive items of interaction and customer involvement to assess the moderating impact. The result show that they have positive impact on customer trust ($\beta=0.088$, $p<0.05$), supporting $H_4$. When the level of customer involvement is relatively high, the interaction has a strong impact on customer trust. When the degree of customer involvement is relatively low, the influence of interaction on customer trust is relatively mild.

**Discussions and Implications**

First, a model of idol traits and fans’ customer relationship quality is constructed, which enriches the relevant empirical research in this field. Second, with respect to previous studies in the research of idol traits, which are mostly discussed from the perspective of fashion [5] and interaction [19], indicating that fashion and interaction have positive impact on customer relationship quality. However, it is not enough. Maven [8] is stressed in this finding. Simultaneously, set customer involvement as moderating variable. The results show that maven has positive impacts on three dimensions of customer relationship quality, which are satisfaction, trust and commitment and customer involvement has a moderating effect between interaction and customer trust. Apart from emphasizing the importance of idol traits, we should have the strategy of customer relationship management applied in the process.

The first limitation might be the sampling proportion of the undergraduates is too high, implying the existence of sampling bias. Second, online sampling is difficult to control the quality of sampling. If finance and time is available, we hope to balance the sampling proportion of different occupations to escape sampling bias and use face-to-face questionnaire collecting method to decease responding bias.

**References**


