Abstract

Blog popularity has surged over the last few years and gained considerable attention by practitioners and researchers. However, the effects of commercial blogs on brick-and-mortar have not been sufficiently investigated. This study thus intended to investigate the effect of blog browsing intention on loyalty toward TV show from the perspective of consumer experience and idolatry. Based on data collected from 370 respondents, the results indicated these perspectives employed in this study are appropriate for elucidating an individual’s blog browsing behavior and loyalty toward TV show. Besides, the blog browsing intention has positive moderating effects on the relationship between consumer experiences and loyalty formation. Several implications for marketers were also proposed.

Keywords: Blog, Experiential Marketing, Idolatry, TRA, TV Show.
1. INTRODUCTION

In 2010, a popular televised singing contest – One Million Star – was all the fashion in Taiwan. The purpose of this TV show is to gather young people who have talent in singing so as to find the ones who have the potential to become superstars. The outcomes of contest on every Friday night have become hot topics among young people in Taiwan (even in other Chinese-spoken regions) and more and more young people got addicted to this show. Besides, the official blog of “One Million Star” also received much attention by audiences of the TV show and already attracts millions of visitors. They can browse the singers’ pictures, read the latest news and reports about the show, and even post their opinions in the online threaded forum. Thousands of articles were posted in the official blog every day and the enthusiasm and intensive discussion among users on the blog also substantially raises the TV show’s rating.

In recent years, the emergence of the Web 2.0 concept has led to the extensive development of a number of Internet application services. Blogs have become one of the most popular Web 2.0-type services on the Internet. Although a blog is originally defined as personal online journal for an individual, it has expanded its role so that not only individuals but also organizations can share and receive information through blogs. Despite the blogging phenomenon has received increased attention and several businesses have begun to recognize the blog’s value, the effects of blogs on business have not been sufficiently investigated by researchers. Thus, the major purpose of this study is to investigate whether the commercial blogs can benefit the brick-and-mortar.

In addition to the blog establishment, One Million Star also tried to fascinate audiences and create pleasurable audience experiences through various sensory effects and emotional appeals during the singing contests. Recently, several marketers have changed their strategy from merely selling products or services to selling consumers an experience. As mentioned by Pine and Gilmore (1999), many companies such as Pizza Hut now sell not so much as experiences. However, this aspect of consumer economy has not been paid much attention by researchers (Pine and Gilmore 1999; Schmitt 1999). This study argues that individuals’ blog browsing and TV watching behavior will be influenced by the experiences they have perceived. Besides, some nameless singers have become more and more famous during the singing contest show and attracted numerous fans. This implies individuals’ adoration toward these singers will also affect their blog browsing and TV watching behaviors. Accordingly, this study intends to answer the following two research questions: (1) Will consumer experiences and idolatry have effects on an individual’s blog browsing intention and loyalty toward TV show? (2) Will an individual’s blog browsing intention influence the relationship between consumer experiences and loyalty toward TV shows?

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Figure 1 identifies the constructs and hypotheses to be examined in this study. First, we posit that an individual’s experiences from a TV show and a Blog positively affect his/her loyalty toward a TV show and attitude toward browsing a blog respectively. Second, an individual’s attitude and two subjective norms – descriptive norm and injunctive norm – are hypothesized to be positively related to his/her intention to browse a blog. Besides, an individual’s intention to browse a blog is also hypothesized to positively lead to his/her loyalty toward a TV show. Third, an individual’s intention to browse a blog and loyalty toward a TV show are posited to be positively affected by his/her idolatry. Finally, the relationship between experience and loyalty is hypothesized to be positively moderated by an individual’s intention to browse a blog. The following section clarifies the theoretical underpinning of these hypotheses.
2.1. Consumer Experience

In contrast to traditional marketers’ focus on functional features and benefits of products, experiential marketing emphasizes on consumer experiences that can provide sensory, emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and relational values (Schmitt 1999). For experiential marketers, consumers not only engage in rational choice, but also are frequently driven by emotions because they are inclined to pursue fantasies, feelings, and fun in their consumption experiences (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982). As suggested by Norris (1941), consumer value is mainly dependent on what a consumer can experience from consuming a certain product or service, rather than the product or service itself. Recently, several researchers have also addressed the importance of consumer experiences in marketing strategies (e.g. Chen and Chen 2010; Brakus et al. 2009; Song et al. 2007; Joy and Sherry 2003; Holbrook 2000; Yelkur 2000).

In order to clarify the nature of consumer experience, Schmitt (1999) proposed five types of experiences that marketers can create for consumers: sensory experiences through sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell (SENSE); affective experiences that range from mildly positive moods to strong emotions of joy and pride (FEEL); cognitive and problem solving experiences that engage consumers creatively (THINK); physical experiences that enrich consumers’ lives by showing them alternative ways of doing things, lifestyles, and interactions (ACT); social-identity experiences that result from relating consumers to a broader social system (RELATE). These experiences can be created and conveyed through various mediums such as mass media, visual and verbal identity, product presence, etc.

According to the interviews with 10 audiences of “One Million Star”, we focus on the SENSE, FEEL, and RELATE experiences from TV show and the FEEL and RELATE experiences from blog. Most interviewees mentioned that they cannot recognize and perceive the THINK and ACT experiences when they watch a TV show or browse a blog. As suggested by Schmitt (1999), individuals who can perceive positive experience from consuming certain products or services will exhibit favorable attitudes toward the products or services. Accordingly, we have the following hypotheses:

H1a: SENSE experience from TV show positively affects loyalty toward TV show.
H1b: FEEL experience from TV show positively affects loyalty toward TV show.
H1c: RELATE experience from TV show positively affects loyalty toward TV show.
H2a: FEEL experience from Blog positively affects attitude toward browsing Blog.
H2b: RELATE experience from Blog positively affects attitude toward browsing Blog.

2.2. The Theory of Reasoned Action

In order to clarify the relationship between attitude and behavior, Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) propose the theory of reasoned action (TRA) that can be employed to account for complete volitional behaviors in a broad range of settings. In the TRA model, an individual’s behavior in question is the dependent variable of interest and posited to be immediately affected by his/her intention to perform the behavior, which in turn is determined jointly by attitude and subjective norm. Attitude captures general evaluations of the behavior performance and is influenced by the beliefs about the consequences of performing the behavior weighted by an individual’s evaluation of each consequence. Subjective norm reflects general perceptions of social pressure to perform the focal behavior and is affected by the beliefs concerning the expectations of important referents weighted by an individual’s motivation to comply with each referent. The perceptions are often found to have low variability because important others are generally perceived to approve of desirable behaviors and disapprove of undesirable behaviors. In order to alleviate this problem, Ajzen (2002) suggest that subjective norm should be divided into the injunctive and the descriptive component. The injunctive norm reflects whether an individual believes important referents want him to perform particular behavior, which represents traditional conceptualization of subjective norm. The descriptive norm, on the other hand, indicates whether important referents themselves perform the particular behavior. According to the arguments of TRA, we propose the following hypotheses:

H3: Attitude toward browsing Blog positively affects intention to browse Blog.

H4a: Injunctive norm about browsing Blog positively affects intention to browse Blog.

H4b: Descriptive norm about browsing Blog positively affects intention to browse Blog.

The audiences can discuss all the topics about a TV show with each others on the show’s official blog. As an individual is inclined to browse the official blog of a TV show, it implies that he/she will be familiar with and even be likely to know all the stuff about the TV show. Thus, he/she may watch the TV show more frequently and forms favorable attitude toward the TV show. This leads to the following hypothesis:

H5: Intention to browse Blog positively affects loyalty toward TV show.

In this study, an individual’s intention to browse the official blog of a TV show is regarded having moderating effect on the relationship between consumer experiences and loyalty. As an individual exhibits higher intention to browse the official blog of a TV show, he/she will pay much more attention to the TV show so that he/she can catch on the latest news and discuss with other users on the official blog. Thus, when he/she perceived more positive experiences from the TV show, he/she will develop much higher loyalty than others with lower intention to browse the official blog. The following hypotheses are then proposed:

H6a: The effect of SENSE experience on Loyalty toward TV show is stronger for individuals with higher intention to browse blog than for individuals with lower intention to browse blog.

H6b: The effect of FEEL experience on Loyalty toward TV show is stronger for individuals with higher intention to browse blog than for individuals with lower intention to browse blog.

H6c: The effect of RELATE experience on Loyalty toward TV show is stronger for individuals with higher intention to browse blog than for individuals with lower intention to browse blog.

2.3. Idolatry

Wikipedia defines an idol as a man-made object that is venerated in some manner. It was initially a religious term; however, it has now been extended to include anyone who is high-spirited or worthy of
respect. Nowadays, the term “idol” is not limited to its traditional meanings. As society evolves and heavy promotion disseminates through mass media, an idol could be an athlete, a politician, a star, a writer, a pop singer, or even a virtual figure in a cartoon or comic (Chiou et al. 2005).

Idolatry, an over-consumption phenomenon, can be classified into worship and modeling (Raviv et al. 1996). Worship is an unusual and strong admiration for or sense of adoration toward an idol, which is expressed by attempts to meet the idol personally or to own related artifacts. Modeling reflects the desire to act like the idol. This includes imitative behaviors that involve copying the idol’s appearance – for instance, dress, hairstyle, speech, and any other social behavioral patterns (Raviv et al. 1996). As people idolize a pop singer, they would enthusiastically gather merchandise and information related to the idol or might adopt the idol as a model. Yang et al. (2008) proposed that idolatrous behavior was significantly related to adolescents’ impulsive buying and can be considered as a ‘trigger’ for marketers.

The social identity theory is often used to explain the phenomenon of idolatry. Identification is an individual’s emotional connection or attachment to a sponsored property (Madrigal 2001). Wann et al. (2000) suggested that individuals would become fans of a sport team because of the sense of identification. As a result, they would attempt to associate themselves with the team. Identification provides consumers with a means of forming self-definition or self-esteem (Joiner et al. 2005); moreover, idolatry can be viewed as a process of identification. Individuals may form their own personality through such a process. In this study, idolatry is viewed as an indicator of the degree to which an individual identifies with and adores to a pop singer on a TV show. Based on the social identity theory, individuals with high idolatry toward a pop singer will pay much more attention to the TV shows and blogs on which the pop singer shows than individuals with low idolatry. Thus, when individuals have higher idolatry, they will exhibit higher loyalty toward a TV show (higher intention to browse a blog) on which their idol shows than individuals with low idolatry. This leads to the following hypotheses:

**H7:** Idolatry positively affects intention to browse Blog.

**H8:** Idolatry positively affects loyalty toward TV show.

3. **RESEARCH METHOD**

Individuals who had the experience of watching “One Million Star” and browsing its official blog were potential respondents in this study. A data collection with questionnaire design was held in three universities in southern Taiwan because most audiences of One Million Star are young people. In order to assure respondents of the confidentiality of their responses, all questionnaires were administered in one author’s presence. All the constructs in the research model were adapted from pre-validated measures in previous research and measured using five-point Likert Scale. The operational definitions and sources of measurement items are shown in Table 1. All items were translated into Chinese, and then wordings will be modified by authors and several MIS graduate students to reflect cultural subtlety and ensure content validity. A pilot test was also conducted to ensure the wordings are understandable and appropriate.

4. **ANALYSES**

Four hundred and thirty nine respondents agreed to participate in this study. Sixty nine responses were discarded as a result of missing values or invalid responses, thus 370 valid respondents remained in the dataset for further analyses. Of all these respondents, 50.8 percent of the respondents were male and 94.9 percent were 18 to 25 years old. 64.2 percent of the respondents were undergraduate students and 35.8 percent were graduate students. With regard to Internet usage, 48.6 percent of the respondents surfed the Internet over five hours per day. Besides, 64.3 percent of the respondents watched TV at least one hour per day.
Measures | Operational Definition | References
--- | --- | ---
SENSE Experience (TV) | The degree to which an individual’s sensory experience from watching a TV show. | Schmitt (1999)
FEEL Experience (TV/Blog) | The degree to which an individual’s affective experience from watching a TV show/ browsing a blog. | Peck and Wiggins (2006); Schmitt (1999)
RELATE Experience (TV/Blog) | The degree to which an individual is related to a broader social group from watching a TV show/browsing a blog. | Henning-Thurau and Walsh (2004); Schmitt (1999)
Loyalty toward TV Show | The degree to which an individual will keep on watch and encourage others to watch a TV show. | Zeithaml et al. (1996)
Attitude toward Browsing Blog | The degree to which an individual has positive feelings about browsing a blog. | Ajzen (2002)
Intention to Browse Blog | The degree to which an individual believe he/she will browse a blog. | Ajzen (2002)
Injunctive Norm about browsing Blog | The degree to which an individual perceives that important referents want him/her to browse a certain blog. | Ajzen (2002)
Descriptive Norm about browsing Blog | The degree to which an individual perceives that important referents themselves browse a certain blog. | Ajzen (2002)
Idolatry | The degree to which an individual identifies with and adores to a celebrity. | Chiou et al. (2005)

Table 1. Measures

4.1. Measurement Model Estimation

According to the two-step procedure recommended by Anderson and Gerbing (1988), we estimated and re-specified the measurement model prior to examining the structural model. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to assess the convergent and discriminant validity of the operationalisation. All the research constructs were modelled as 11 correlated first-order factors and employ LISREL 8.70 using the Maximum Likelihood (ML) estimation to estimate the measurement model. We performed the CFA with 36 items and the threshold employed for judging the significance of factor loadings was 0.60 suggested by Sharma (1996). We eliminated one item from Idolatry because of low factor loading. As the measurement model estimation shown in Table 2, factor loadings of all measurement items range from 0.77 to 0.94, which indicates acceptable convergent validity. The CFA resulted in a chi-square statistic of 1276.26 with 505 degrees of freedom. Since the chi-square is less than three times the degrees of freedom, a good fit is implied (Carmines and McIver 1981). Furthermore, the values on other goodness of fit indexes also show a relative good fit between the measurement model and data.

We also assessed construct reliability by calculating composite reliability that assesses whether the specified indicators are sufficiently representative of their respective latent factors, as suggested by Segars (1997). These estimates of composite reliability of latent factors range from 0.88 to 0.95, which are all well above the threshold of 0.70 suggested by Jöreskog and Sörbom (1989); thus, acceptable construct reliability is implied. However, composite reliability does not reflect the degree of variance that is captured by the construct in relation to the amount of variance due to measurement error (Fornell and Larcker 1981). Thus, average variance extracted (AVE) estimate was employed to obtain this information. AVE estimate of 0.50 or higher indicates acceptable validity for a construct’s measure (Fornell and Larcker 1981). All AVE estimates in this study (range from 0.72 to 0.86) are well above the cut-off value, which suggests that all measurement scales have convergent validity. In order to assess discriminant
validity among the constructs, we calculated square root of AVE for each construct and compared them with inter-construct correlations for each pair of constructs. Result also shows that square roots of all AVE estimates for each construct are greater than inter-construct correlations; thus, discriminant validity is supported.

**Model Fit Indexes**

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<th></th>
<th>$\chi^2$(df)</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
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<th>NFI</th>
<th>NNFI</th>
<th>GFI</th>
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**Correlations Among Latent Factors and Internal Consistency**

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<th>10</th>
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<th>CR</th>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>0.93</td>
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<td>5. IDO</td>
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<td>0.91</td>
<td>0.77</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>0.92</td>
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<td>7. BGR</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>8. BGAT</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>9. BGBI</td>
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<td>0.91</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>0.83</td>
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<td>10. IN</td>
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<td>11. DN</td>
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</table>

TVS = SENSE experience (TV); TVF = FEEL experience (TV); TVR = RELATE experience (TV); TVLY = Loyalty toward TV show; IDO = Idolatry; BGF = FEEL experience (blog); BGR = RELATE experience (blog); BGAT = Attitude toward browsing blog; BGBI = Intention to browse blog; IN = Injunctive norm about browsing blog; DN = Descriptive norm about browsing blog.

Square root of AVE for each construct was shown in the diagonal of the correlation matrix.

**Table 2. Measurement Model Estimation**

4.2. **Direct Effect Testing**

In order to test the direct effect hypotheses in our research model, a structural equation modelling (SEM) analysis was performed. We modelled 11 first-order factors with 11 hypothetical causal paths and employ LISREL 8.70 with the Maximum Likelihood estimation to estimate the structural model. As shown in Fig. 2, two out of 11 hypothetical causal paths are not significant. First, both FEEL Experience and RELATE Experience significantly affect Attitude toward Browsing Blog and Loyalty toward TV Show. Thus, H1 is partially supported and H2 is supported. Second, the positive effects of Attitude toward Browsing Blog and Descriptive Norm on Intention to Browse Blog are supported while the relationship between Injunctive Norm and Intention to Browse Blog is not significant. Intention to Browse Blog also significantly leads to Loyalty toward TV Show. It implies that both H3 and H5 are supported while H4 is partially supported. Third, results also supported the positive effects of Idolatry on both Intention to Browse Blog and Loyalty toward TV Show. Both H7 and H8 are supported.
This study employed moderated regression analyses (MRA) to identify the moderating effects without information loss resulting from the artificial transformation of a continuous variable into a qualitative one in the subgroup analyses (Szymanski et al. 1995). Table 3 shows the results of MRA for the moderating effect of Intention to Browse Blog on the relationship between Experience and Loyalty toward TV Show. This study found significant change in $R^2$ between Model 2 and Model 3, which indicates the significant moderating effect of Intention to Browse Blog. The relationship between SENSE experience and RELATE experience and Loyalty toward TV Show are positively moderated by Intention to Browse Blog. Thus, Hypothesis 6 is partially supported. This study also found that the change in $R^2$ from Model 1 to Model 2 is significant; Intention to Browse Blog is thus regarded as a quasi moderator.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Models</th>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>$\Delta R^2$</th>
<th>$\Delta F$ for $\Delta R^2$</th>
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<tr>
<td>Model 1</td>
<td>SENSE Experience</td>
<td>0.133***</td>
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<td></td>
<td>FEEL Experience</td>
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<td></td>
<td>RELATE Experience</td>
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<td>Model 2</td>
<td>SENSE Experience</td>
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<td>RELATE Experience</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Intention to Browse Blog</td>
<td>0.304***</td>
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<td>Model 3</td>
<td>SENSE Experience</td>
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<td>RELATE Experience</td>
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<td>SENSE x Intention</td>
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<td></td>
<td>RELATE x Intention</td>
<td>0.527**</td>
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</table>

$\chi^2 = 1377.90$, df = 521; RMSEA = 0.067; CFI = 0.98; NFI = 0.97; NNFI = 0.98; GFI = 0.82

$R^2$ represents the variation explained in endogenous constructs.

Solid lines indicate significant paths. Dashed lines indicate non-significant paths.

* $p<0.05$; ** $p<0.01$; *** $p<0.001$
5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study investigated the effect of blog browsing intention on loyalty toward TV show from the perspectives of consumer experiences, TRA, and idolatry. Results can be employed to answer the two research questions described in Introduction section of this study. For first question, results revealed all the three perspectives are appropriate for elucidating an individual’s blog browsing and TV watching behaviors. Both FEEL experience and RELATE experience will lead to favorable behavior for blog and TV show. However, the effect of sensory experience on loyalty toward TV show could not be verified by our results. For the subjective norm from TRA, the important others’ actual behaviors rather than their opinion can form the social pressure to browse a blog. Although Ajzen (2002) suggested that subjective norm should be measured in injunctive and descriptive components, the effects of these two norms still had not been sufficiently investigated by literature. Further studies can include both injunctive norm and descriptive norm in empirical models to help us better understand the role of social pressures in explaining individuals’ behavior. Besides, our results also confirmed that individuals with higher idolatry will form favorable behaviors for blog and TV show. For second question, as indicated by our results, when individuals have higher intention to browse an official blog of certain TV show, their perceived experiences from watching the TV show will have stronger effects on their loyalty formation. Among the three types of experiences in research model, blog browsing intention only played moderator on the effects of SENSE and RELATE experiences.

There are several implications of our study. First, this study employed the perspective of experiential marketing to investigate the blog browsing and TV watching behaviors. As suggested by Pine and Gilmore (1999), the issues of consumer experience had not been paid much attention by literature. This study provides a compelling theoretical framework for conducting an empirical study for this line of research. Future studies can extend this study to better explicate the effects of consumer experiences on various media. Second, the results show that consumer experiences are important prerequisites for media using behavior. Thus, marketers could focus on offering consumers pleasant experiences rather than promoting their blog or TV shows. Third, blog can enhance consumers’ TV show loyalty caused by sensory and relational experiences. Although many practitioners believe commercial blogs will bring added values for their business, past studies had not substantially verified the benefits of blog on brick-and-mortar. This study provides valid evidences for marketers’ media strategies. Blog is essentially a medium that can relate an individual to a broader social group. Marketers can take advantage of the extensive discussion and interaction among potential consumers on their blogs to increase the popularity of their products or services. Thus, the effects of consumer experiences from their products or services will also be enhanced.

Future research may be conducted with the limitations of this study in mind. First, our findings were derived based on the sample from three universities in southern Taiwan. One needs to be cautious while applying our findings to other kinds of consumer groups. Second, the data was collected from individuals who had watched “One Million Star” and browsed its official blog. The generalizability of our results may be questionable. Third, as this study employed a cross-sectional design, all the hypothetical causal relationships can only be inferred rather than proven. A study with longitudinal design can enhance our understanding about the effect of consumer experiences.

References

