Effects of Travel Agent’s Brand Commitment on Seniors’ Satisfaction - Mediation Effect of Word-of-Mouth Behavior

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ABSTRACT

The results of this study are revealing the significant effects that the higher travel agents’ Brand Commitment of the, the higher customer Satisfaction is presented; travel agents’ Brand Commitment to senior customers’ Word-of-mouth Behavior presenting the remarkable effects that the higher travel agents’ Brand Commitment of, the better willingness of customers’ word-of-mouth is shown; senior customers’ Word-of-mouth Behavior to the Satisfaction revealing the notable effects that the higher intention of customers’ Word-of-mouth Behavior, the higher Satisfaction is shown; and the moderating effects of Word-of-mouth Behavior on the relationship between Brand Commitment and Satisfaction.

Keywords: Seniors, Brand Commitment, Word-of-mouth Behavior, Satisfaction
1. INTRODUCTION

Population Ageing is regarded as a major problem in modern advanced countries. In face of increasing domestic old-age population, issues related to the elderly are emphasized. Having elder life be healthier and livelier becomes a primary issue in current ageing societies.

The globalization and the era of knowledge economy have tourism industry gradually become an emerging star industry globally. Since the practice of five-day weekday system in 2001, the citizens have gradually stressed on lifestyles and recreational tourism that leisure changes from personal behaviors to a social phenomenon. People expect to pursue spiritual comfort and satisfaction beyond basic living needs. Such a social change has been constantly changing the social form. Since the promotion of national living standards, people are looking for material enjoyment. Nervous and busy life has people desire to leave the residential areas and travel around for physical, mental, and spiritual modulation; tourism businesses are therefore emerged. After the practice of five-day weekday, the increasing leisure time for the citizens hastens the era of leisure; the changes of recreation activities broaden the tourism scope; the increasing national income establishes the economic basis on tourism; the advance of transportation promotes popular tourism leisure; the promotion of educational standards stimulates the motivation for leisure tourism; and, the expansion of urbanization forms the trend of leisure tourism.

Iso-Ahola (1980) pointed out the positive correlations between participation in recreation
activities and seniors’ satisfaction with living; leisure could enhance seniors’ morale and spiritual comfort and help an individual release potential pressure that participation in leisure could enhance physical and mental health and reduce crises in late life (especially after 60 years old).

According to 2014 National Tourism Survey of Tourism Bureau (2015), most citizens went abroad for travel, and the selection of travel agents, either for domestic travel or international travel, mostly relied on recommendations. Accordingly, Word-of-mouth Behavior presented the importance. John and Susan (2000) indicated that tourism products would be repurchased through customer satisfaction, and word-of-mouth could bring new customers to help the considerable marketing expenses for tourism businesses.

A characteristic brand would not try to please everyone but focuses on certain segmented consumers to reflect the specific benefits or experiences so as to win the intellectual and emotional identification. Regardless of the breadth of such segmentation, the strong brand identification is built aiming at “what services provided” and target consumers’ requirements, desire, and preference. Advertisement, package, endorsement, and customer services are continuously reinforced after the subtle relationship being understood and the brand characteristics being confirmed to establish favorable relationship between brand and customers. When customers contact the sales representatives of a private brand with strong impression, the brand image and preference would be firmed. The strong brand promise could
actually affect customer perception of products or services to generate more positive experience memories; and, a brand could closely connect with an event and a person so as to actually perceive the empathy with someone else when investing in purchasing certain brand.

Tourism industry also presents the brand image and brand promise. When serving customers, a tourism business would offer distinct Brand Commitment or Satisfaction for customers with different brand image about the enterprise; such perception and cognition could be resulted from Word-of-mouth Behavior. However to have an enterprise implement Brand Commitment becomes an important challenge.

It is considered in this study that commitment could help establish the sense of identity. In other words, customers would deepen the brand promise when they appear good brand image and prefer to the brand. Brand Commitment would further hasten their brand identification to actively respond to Word-of-mouth Behavior. When an enterprise could have the customers, according to the brand image, brand preference, and brand promise, freely express their support to the private brand, the satisfaction with the enterprise would be promoted.

Based on the research background and motivation, the following research purposes are classified in this study.

1. Based on Brand Commitment, the theoretical framework is established to interpret the effects of Brand Commitment on customer Satisfaction, and the relationship among variables is verified with experiments.
2. The effects of Brand Commitment on customers’ Word-of-mouth Behavior are discussed.

3. The mediation effect of Word-of-mouth Behavior on the relationship between Brand Commitment and Satisfaction is inspected.

4. Finally, practical suggestions are proposed according to the research results.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Seniors

World Health Organization defines that people above the age of 65 are called “old age population”, i.e. “seniors”. The Senior Citizens Welfare Act, revised by domestic government in 2002, regulates that people who are above 65 years old are “elders”.

Whitford (1998) defined people aged 50-64 as pre-seniors and the ones aged above 65 as seniors. Erik Erikson (1950) divided the development of human life into eight phases, including infancy (under 1 year old), early childhood (1-2 years old), preschool period (2-6 years old), school period (6-12 years old), adolescence (12-21 years old), adulthood (22-40 years old), middle age period (40-64 years old), and senility (above 65 years old).

Domestic old-age population and the ratio are annually increasing because of medical and social progress. The old-age population in 1949 was merely 184,622, about 2.5% of total population, it revealed 2.9% in 1970, 4.3% in 1980, 6.2% in 1990, and over 7% in September, 1993, when it became “ageing society”.

Moreover, the 2012 statistics showed the life expectancy 79.45 years old in Taiwan. It was estimated that the old-age population above 65 years old would reach 3,118,000, about 13.3% of total population by 2016 because of decreasing birth rate, the population of people over 65 years old would exceed 14.6% by 2018 to reach “aged society”, and the population of people aged above 65 would increase up to 20.1% in 2025 to achieve “super aged society” (Council for Economic Planning and Development, 2014).

2.2 Brand commitment

In order to continuously maintain current interaction and relationship with people, affairs, and objects in the interpersonal interaction, people would try their best to keep the relationship. Such psychological behaviors inducing an individual to complete actions and insist on the selected affairs are called commitment. Morgan and Hunt (1994) defined commitment as people believing in the importance to continue relationship with others and making efforts to maintain such relationship; they regarded the favorable relationship commitment with transactional partners as the key factor in maintaining the success to help pursue long-term benefits in the relationship. In this case, promisors believed the relationship being worth maintaining and could stand for the temptation of short-term alternative benefits. In other words, a party with commitment believed it being worthy to ensure the continuity of relationship. Fournier (1998) regarded Brand Commitment as affective or psychological attachment to a brand in a product category making customers willing to maintain the
development of brand relationship. Discussing the relationship between customers and brand, based on such a concept, Brand Commitment was a core concept of a company developing and maintaining customers-brand relationship and would further affect the relative value of the brand. Apparently, Brand Commitment is an attachment which would make customers willing to maintain the relationship development with the brand.

Brand Commitment could be measured by Affective Commitment, Continuance Commitment, and Normative Commitment.

1. Affective Commitment:

Affective Commitment exists in consumers agreeing with an attachment to the transactional partner. In relationship marketing, Gundlach, Achrol and Mentzer (1995) regarded Affective Commitment as attitudinal loyalty which would affect consumers’ involvement and attachment and was the mix of involvement and attachment. Aaker (1997) proposed brand product to develop properties to attract consumers and have consumers present brand attachment. Fournier (1998) also indicated that brand attachment was formed by a brand presenting personalization conforming to the characteristics. When a product or service delivered superior benefits and appealed to consumers, the product or service would be the best choice for consumers. Furthermore, consumers would appear affective commitment to the attached brand and regard the brand as the best on the physical attribute evaluation and the beneficial and
psychological attachment. Consequently, consumers would present Affective
Commitment when the brand attachment appears. Once the transaction was built on
Affective Commitment, customers would be willing to maintain the relationship because
of agreeing with and favoring to the transactional manufacturer. Morgan and Hunt (1994)
and Gruen, Summers, and Acito (2000) considered that Affective Commitment in
relationship marketing was established based on shared value, trust, devotion, sense of
identity, attachment, and sense of belonging.

2. Continuance Commitment:

From the aspect of benefits, Continuance Commitment refers to the relationship between
transactional parties depending on the value. Dwyer, Schurr and Oh (1987) and
Gundlach et al. (1995) indicated that the transaction would tend to commitment when a
party faced obvious switch costs or the received benefits could hardly be replaced by
other potential transactional partners. From Becker’s (1960) theory, additional benefits
referred to consumers tending to continue the relationship with original transactional
partners as they potentially perceived the additional benefit in switch behaviors.

3. Normative Commitment:

Normative Commitment is defined that organizational loyalty is regarded as an
obligation which must obey the moral norms. In this case, shared value, reciprocity, and
legitimacy theories could be used for explaining Normative Commitment.
2.3 Word-of-mouth behavior

Since 1960, a lot of research presented the effects and importance of word-of-mouth on consumer behaviors (Wirtz and Chew, 2002). Relevant research pointed out word of mouth as a primary and optional information source for consumers (Swan and Oliver, 1989). As word-of-mouth is the exchange of product information among people through communications, it would further affect consumer evaluation and consumption intention.

Different from general propagation, word-of-mouth marketing is comparatively self-directed and reliable and most of the sources are the consumers’ relatives and friends that it is considered trustable. It therefore reveals great influence and is emphasized by researchers or in practice.

Traditional definition of word of mouth was proposed by Arndt (1967) that word-of-mouth (WOM) was the information communication behaviors generated from information delivers to receivers face-to-face, i.e. there was not commercial intention between delivers and receivers, who orally talked about certain brand, products, or services. Word-of-mouth becomes the word of mouth by chance, rather than by searching, that it is uncontrollable.

Word of mouth is an infection disease, which could infect customers with the word-of-mouth virus to make customers automatically spread word-of-mouth. Word of mouth is therefore spread based on satisfying certain conditions. In addition to provide product information and opinion exchange, word-of-mouth also provides opportunities to satisfy social interaction.
The role of word of mouth in consumption behaviors has been consistently affirmed and is regarded as the key success factor in products (Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1955; Kiel and Layton, 1981; Murray, 1991).

Summing up the researchers’ opinions, the following factors are proposed in this study.

1. Abundant and conflict information provided for consumers from external environments could result in decision interference and affect consumers making decisions. Consumers therefore would seek for suggestions and opinions from trustable experts or friends.

2. In face of expensive products or uncertain services, consumers would actively collect product information to reduce cognitive risks and enhance certainty (Arndt, 1967).

3. People are likely to rely on other’s opinions when evaluating new products or new services (Engel, Blackwell, & Kegerreis, 1969).

4. When selecting professional service providers, such as medical and legal services, word of mouth plays a critical reference role (Murray, 1991).

When a product is complicated and lack of objective evaluation standards, interpersonal influence would become important, and word-of-mouth information becomes a primary reference to make purchase decision.

2.4 Customer satisfaction

The idea of Customer Satisfaction was first proposed by Cardozo (1965), who regarded Customer Satisfaction as customer expectancy to products and the use results. When the use
result exceeded the expectancy, customers would be satisfied. Cardozo (1965) first studied customer expectancy and satisfaction to lead the research trend on Customer Satisfaction. Spreng and Mackoy (1996) referred Customer Satisfaction as the perceived sensation and rationality of consumers evaluating the purchase process after the purchase. Kotler (2003) regarded Customer Satisfaction as the perceived pleasure, which was originated from the perceived performance on products and individual expectancy to products. Customer Satisfaction was constructed on the experiences of customer expectancy before purchasing products or services and the perception after the purchase. The satisfactory experiences appear on the real perception being larger than the expectancy.

Customer Satisfaction basically consists of three frameworks, namely Expectancy Theory, Perceived Performance Theory, and Expectancy-Perceived Performance Disconfirmation and considers the correlations between satisfaction and uncertainty size and direction. However, the operational definition of uncertainty is affected by the difference between expectancy and perceived performance \((D = P - E)\), and the perceived performance is influenced by expectancy. Ulaga and Eggert (2006) proposed attribute satisfaction and overall satisfaction and indicated that satisfaction could contain consumers’ overall satisfaction or consumers’ observation on product and service attributes as well as the subjective satisfaction judgment after the performance evaluation.
2.5 Theories among concepts

Gundlach et al. (1995) regarded Affective Commitment as attitudinal loyalty, which would affect consumer involvement and attachment, and the mixture of involvement and attachment. Aaker (1997) proposed brand products to attract consumers and have consumers generate the brand attachment. In the research on brand attachment, Fournier (1998) mentioned that a brand presenting personalization and conforming to personal properties of consumers would form brand attachment. When a product or service delivered superior benefits and appealed to consumers, the product or service would be the best choice for the consumers. Furthermore, consumers would appear affective commitment to the attached brand and regarded the brand as the best on the physical attribute evaluation and the beneficial and psychological attachment. Consumers showing brand attachment would present Affective Commitment to the brand. When transactional relationship was established on Affective Commitment, customers would be willing to maintain the relationship because of identification and preference. Morgan and Hunt (1994) and Gruen et al. (2000) considered that Affective Commitment in relationship marketing was established based on shared value, trust, devotion, sense of identity, attachment, and sense of belonging. Kotler (2003) pointed out Customer Satisfaction as perceived pleasure which was originated from perceived performance on the product and individual expectancy with products. Customer Satisfaction was constructed on customer expectancy before purchasing products or services and perceived experiences after
the purchase. When the actual perception was higher than the expectancy, satisfactory experiences would be generated. Accordingly, after customers presented affective commitment on a brand, satisfaction would appear because of identification and preference to the brand. The hypothesis is proposed in this study.

Hypothesis 1. Customer Brand Commitment to an enterprise presents significant effects on the Satisfaction.

Traditional definition of word of mouth was proposed by Arndt (1967) that word-of-mouth (WOM) was the communication behaviors between information delivers and receivers face-to-face, i.e. between spreaders and receivers without commercial intention, to talk about certain brand, product, or service orally. It was accidentally for word-of-mouth becoming word of mouth that it was uncontrollable. Word of mouth was an infection disease, which could infect customers with the word-of-mouth virus to have customers naturally spread out word-of-mouth. Word of mouth therefore was spread based on satisfying certain conditions. In addition to product information and opinion exchange, word-of-mouth also provided opportunities to satisfy social interaction. The role of word of mouth in consumption behaviors was consistently affirmed and regarded as the key success factor in products (Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1955; Kiel and Layton, 1981; Murray, 1991). Accordingly, customers with Brand Commitment would hasten the brand identification and actively respond to the interpersonal interaction. The research hypothesis is further proposed in this study.
Hypothesis 2. Customer Brand Commitment to an enterprise reveals remarkable effects on the Word-of-mouth Behavior.

Engel, Miniard, and Blackwell (1993) argued that information was an element to construct consumers’ purchasing behaviors. When consumers could receive richer information, the purchase attitudes would tend to positive so that the real purchasing behavior would be generated. Comparing to other information channels, Murray (1991) mentioned that consumers were likely to believe in others’ suggestions when purchasing services as services revealed high intangibility so that consumers could not directly compare them before the purchase. The uncertainty would be reduced through others’ experiences. Research indicated that consumers might depend more on such intangible and interpersonal relationship of such experiential services, i.e. word of mouth (Murray, 1991; Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman, 1993).

According to above inference, customers would seek for tourism information through word-of-mouth marketing to reduce the uncertain information or products through sharing and experiences and to enhance the satisfaction. The hypothesis is therefore proposed in this study.

Hypothesis 3. Word-of-mouth Behavior appears positive effects on Customer Satisfaction.
3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research framework and hypothesis

According to the literatures, Brand Commitment would affect Satisfaction, Brand Commitment would influence Word-of-mouth Behavior, and Word-of-mouth Behavior could affect Satisfaction. Consequently, the research framework is proposed in this study, Figure 1.

![Figure 1 Research framework](image)

Data source: Organized in this study

From above theories, the following hypotheses are proposed according to the effects among Brand Commitment, Word-of-mouth Behavior, and Satisfaction.

Hypothesis 1. Travel agents’ Brand Commitment shows positive effects on seniors’ Satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2. Travel agents’ Brand Commitment presents positive effects on seniors’ Word-of-mouth Behavior.

Hypothesis 3. Seniors’ Word-of-mouth Behavior to travel agents reveals positive effects on
the Satisfaction.

Hypothesis 4. Word-of-mouth Behavior appears mediation effects on the relationship between Brand Commitment and Satisfaction.

3.2 Research variable and operational definition

3.2.1 Brand commitment

The dimension for Brand Commitment in this study is referred to Morgan and Hunt (1994), aiming to test the effects of the travel agent’s Brand Commitment on senior customers’ attitudes.

3.2.2 Word-of-mouth behavior

The dimensions for Customer Satisfaction in this study are referred to Swan et al. (1989), where evaluation and suggestions are the measuring variables. Evaluation refers to senior customers delivering word-of-mouth with positive or negative information about the travel agent. Suggestions, on the other hand, refer to senior customers recommending others to revisit the travel agent based on word of mouth.

3.2.3 Satisfaction

The dimensions for Customer Satisfaction in this study are referred to Zeithamel (1988) who used perceived quality and perceived value as the measuring variables. Perceived quality indicates senior customers’ perception of the travel agent’s products, service personnel, and overall evaluation. Perceived value refers to senior customers’ perceived evaluation of the
travel agent’s products or services.

3.3 Sampling design

This study was investigated in June 1-30, 2015. Senior customers of 14 Lion Travel branches in Tainan and Kaohsiung are studied. With Convenience Sampling, senior customers who personally visit 14 Lion Travel branches in Tainan and Kaohsiung are distributed the questionnaires after explaining the research. Total 138 valid copies are retrieved.

3.4 Data analysis

The retrieved questionnaires are analyzed and tested the hypotheses with SPSS17.0, including Descriptive Statistics, Reliability Analysis, Validity Analysis, and Regression Analysis.

The results reveal that the reliability of Brand Commitment, Word-of-mouth Behavior, and Customer Satisfaction achieves 0.7, showing the stability and consistency of the questionnaire, Table 1. In regard to internal validity, Nunnally (1978) suggested to estimate the internal validity coefficient with the square root of reliability. The result presents the internal validity of Brand Commitment, Word-of-mouth Behavior, and Customer Satisfaction in 0.90~0.95, revealing the abilities of the questionnaire of reflecting same features and prediction, Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 1 Reliability and Validity Analysis of this research scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dimension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand Commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word-of-mouth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior Satisfaction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data source: Organized in this study
4. EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH

The data in this study are collected with questionnaire survey; total 140 copies are distributed, and 138 valid copies are retrieved, with the retrieval rate 98.5%.

4.1 Analysis of descriptive statistics

Regarding the basic features of samples, total 85 samples are female, about 62%; 97 samples are aged 65-70, about 70%; 104 samples are married, about 75%; 89 samples show the educational attainment under senior (vocation) high school, about 64%; and, 89 samples reveal the average monthly income below NT$20000, about 64%, Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 2 Basic data of research samples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Item</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational attainment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly income</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
4.2 Regression analysis

4.2.1 Effects of brand commitment on satisfaction

From Table 3, travel agents’ Brand Commitment to senior customer Satisfaction appears significant $\beta = 0.832$ and $p = 0.000$, revealing the significant effects that the higher travel agents’ Brand Commitment of the, the higher customer Satisfaction is presented. Hypothesis 1 is supported.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>.738</td>
<td>.105</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Brand</td>
<td>.794</td>
<td>.028</td>
<td>.832</td>
<td>27.975</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Dependent Variable: Satisfaction

* for $p < 0.05$, ** for $p < 0.01$, *** for $p < 0.001$

4.2.2 Effects of brand commitment on word-of-mouth behavior

Travel agents’ Brand Commitment to Senior customers’ Word-of-mouth Behavior reveals significant $\beta = 0.764$ and $p = 0.000$, Table 4, presenting the remarkable effects that the higher
travel agents’ Brand Commitment of, the better willingness of customers’ word-of-mouth is
defined. Hypothesis 2 is supported.

TABLE 4 Regression Analysis of Brand Commitment and Word-of-mouth Behavior

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>.663</td>
<td>.124</td>
<td>6.921</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Brand</td>
<td>.694</td>
<td>.111</td>
<td>.764</td>
<td>26.562</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Dependent Variable: Word-of-mouth Behavior

* for p < 0.05, ** for p < 0.01, *** for p < 0.001

4.2.3 Effects of word-of-mouth behavior on satisfaction

Senior customers’ Word-of-mouth Behavior to the Satisfaction appears the significant $\beta = 0.512$ and $p = 0.000$, Table 5, revealing the notable effects that the higher intention of customers’ Word-of-mouth Behavior, the higher Satisfaction is shown. Hypothesis 3 is supported.
TABLE 5 Regression Analysis of Word-of-mouth Behavior and Satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>.478</td>
<td>.074</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.761</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Word-of-mouth Behavior</td>
<td>.499</td>
<td>.052</td>
<td>.512</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Dependent Variable: Satisfaction

* for \( p < 0.05 \), ** for \( p < 0.01 \), *** for \( p < 0.001 \)

4.2.4 Mediation effect of word-of-mouth behavior

According to Baron and Kenny (1986), Regression Analysis is applied to verify the mediation effect of Word-of-mouth Behavior. Baron and Kenny (1986) indicated that when the effects of independent variables on dependent variables reduced by the mediator, but still reached the significance, the mediator presented partial mediation effects. However, when the effects of independent variables on dependent variables were not significance after adding the mediator, it revealed complete mediation effects.

From Table 6, Brand Commitment is the independent variable and Word-of-mouth Behavior is the dependent variable in the first regression model. The analysis result shows \( R^2 = 0.317 \).
(F=75.129, p=0.000), presenting that Brand Commitment could explain 31.7% variance of Word-of-mouth Behavior. The standardized coefficient (β) appears 0.456 achieving the significance (p=0.000) that Brand Commitment shows positive effects on Word-of-mouth Behavior.

TABLE 6 Analysis of mediation effect of Word-of-mouth Behavior on the relationship between Brand Commitment and Satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent variable</th>
<th>Dependent variable</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Word-of-mouth Behavior</td>
<td>0.456</td>
<td>0.512</td>
<td>0.346</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand Commitment</td>
<td>0.397</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( F )</td>
<td>75.129</td>
<td>63.678</td>
<td>56.349</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( R^2 )</td>
<td>0.317</td>
<td>0.284</td>
<td>0.302</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( \Delta F )</td>
<td>75.129</td>
<td>63.678</td>
<td>36.893</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( \Delta R^2 )</td>
<td>0.317</td>
<td>0.284</td>
<td>0.130</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( P )</td>
<td>0.000***</td>
<td>0.000***</td>
<td>0.000***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Brand Commitment is the independent variable and Satisfaction is the dependent variable in the second regression model. The analysis result presents \( R^2=0.284 \) (\( F=63.678, p=0.000 \)) that
Brand Commitment could explain 28.4% variance of Satisfaction. The standardized coefficient ($\beta$) reveals 0.512, reaching the significance ($p=0.000$) that Brand Commitment presents positive effects on Satisfaction.

Brand Commitment and Word-of-mouth Behavior are the independent variables and Satisfaction is the dependent variable in the third model. The result shows the explanation of variance ($\Delta R^2$) increases 0.130 ($F = 56.349, p = 0.000$), achieving the significance. The standardized coefficient ($\beta$) of Brand Commitment to Word-of-mouth Behavior appears 0.346 ($p = 0.000$), reaching the significance. Apparently, Brand Commitment and Word-of-mouth Behavior show direct effects on Satisfaction. When Word-of-mouth Behavior is added, the standardized coefficient ($\beta$) of Brand Commitment to Satisfaction reduces from 0.512 in Model 2 down to 0.346 in Model 3, revealing the moderating effects of Word-of-mouth Behavior on the relationship between Brand Commitment and Satisfaction that Hypothesis 4 is supported.

5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

5.1 Conclusion

Brand management is the most popular issue in modern business communities and has become the jargon language. Some people even called it as Brand Revolution. It presents that a brand could determine the differences in products and services in such crowded market
competition, which is considered as the opportunity to stand out.

A brand is not simple a marketing tool, but a long-term, investing, and strategic idea.

Enterprises have gradually considered the key status of a brand and regarded it as a strategy. Brand management therefore has become an important research issue on brand marketing management. From the aspect of competitive advantages, brand orientation is a key factor in future competitiveness. The so-called brand contains the physical product brand and psychological service brand, which also refers to consumers’ impression. An enterprise gradually stresses on consumer perception and understand the importance of brand image.

The building of brand image covers external markets and internal products. The former involves in marketing, business, and advertisement, while the latter shows products to consumers through development and design and enhances the brand image through products. A characteristic brand would not try to please everyone, but concentrates on consumers in certain segmentation to reflect the specific benefits or experiences and win the mental and emotional identification. Regardless of the breadth of the segmentation, the strong brand identification has to aim at “provided services” and target consumers’ requirements, desires, and preference. After acquiring understanding in the subtle relationship and the brand characteristics being confirmed, advertisement, package, endorsement, and customer services are constantly reinforced to establish favorable relationship between brand and customers.

Customers would firm the impression and preference when contacting sales representatives.
with strong impression of the private brand. Strong brand promise indeed could affect
customer perception of products or services to generate more positive experience memories.
The research result reveals the significantly positive effects of Word-of-mouth Behavior on
Satisfaction, showing that Word-of-mouth Behavior could actually influence Customer
Satisfaction. Such a result corresponds to Bruyn and Lilien’s (2008) definition of
word-of-mouth marketing, who considered that personal opinions and information exchange
could affect customers’ choices and purchase decisions as well as customer expectancy and
the perception and opinions about products or services after the use. It is therefore considered
in this study that the key of word-of-mouth marketing and the characteristics of online
marketing should be understood in order to reach the optimal marketing performance to
enhance a tourist’s satisfaction.

What is more, the mediation effect of Word-of-mouth Behavior on the relationship between
Brand Commitment and customer Satisfaction is also found out in this study, meaning that, in
addition to Brand Commitment and Satisfaction, senior customers would change the selection
of a travel agent because of Word-of-mouth Behavior about the tourism information and
prices. Since Satisfaction is a multi-dimensional point of view affected by the interaction
among personal experiences, culture, and society, other people’s comments on the travel agent
and service quality would be understood, and high Satisfaction is created with Brand
Commitment.
5.2 Suggestion

Restricted to labor, objects, and time, the research subjects are restricted to the senior customers in 14 Lion Travel branches in Tainan and Kaohsiung. These samples could not stand for the entire Taiwan, as Lion Travel is not the only choice for Taiwanese tourists. Southeast Travel, Cola Tour, and Life Tour are representative travel agents in Taiwan. It is therefore suggested that successive researchers could expand the research area and study senior customers of other large travel agents.
REFERENCE


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