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Brand attachment and customer citizenship behaviors

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ABSTRACT

Service brand attachment has emerged as a growing body of research. Although previous studies have examined the relationship between brand attachment and customer behaviors, the mechanism underlying this relationship remains unknown, particularly in a service context. The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between brand attachment and customer citizenship behaviors and to clarify the role of perceived value among regular customers of international hotel brands in Taiwan. To examine this model, confirmatory factor analysis was employed to analyze survey data from 299 hotel customers, the results of which indicated that perceived value completely mediated the relationship between brand attachment and customer citizenship behaviors. Therefore, perceived value is the mechanism that explains how service brand attachment is associated with customer citizenship behaviors. These results demonstrate the importance of perceived value and imply that service managers should strengthen customers' perceived value of service brands to enhance customer citizenship behaviors.

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Brand attachment; perceived value; customer citizenship

Introduction

Although previous studies have confirmed the existence of brand attachment, few empirical studies have investigated whether it influences customer attitudes and behaviors in a service context. Strong attachments that connect the service brand with the self are associated with customers' commitment to preserving a relationship with the brand (Thomson, MacInnis, & Park, 2005), which in turn affects customer citizenship behaviors (Bove, Pervan, Beatty, & Shiu, 2009; Yi & Gong, 2008). Customer citizenship behaviors are defined as voluntary and discretionary behaviors that are not required for the successful production or delivery of a service but that benefit the services of an organization overall (Bartikowski & Walsh, 2011; Groth, 2005). When consumers have strongly attached thoughts and feelings regarding a service brand, brand-self connection and brand prominence may exert a disproportionately strong influence on customers' attitudes and behaviors (Thomson et al., 2005). Research has highlighted several consequences of brand attachment in customers, including customer in-role behaviors such as purchase intentions, willingness to pay a

price premium, and customer cooperation (Hyun & Han, 2015; Hyun & Kim, 2014; Park, MacInnis, Priester, Eisingerich, & Iacobucci, 2010), but has only sparingly addressed the question of whether brand attachment also influences customer extra-role behaviors. Extra-role behaviors are voluntary helpful behaviors enacted toward a company, service provider, or other customers that are not required for core service delivery (Bove et al., 2009). Customers may exhibit in-role and/or extra-role behaviors in a service context (Groth, 2005). Therefore, a deeper understanding of the influence of service brand attachment on customer citizenship behaviors is warranted.

Previous studies have demonstrated the importance of perceived value as an antecedent of customer behaviors (Li, Li, & Kambele, 2012; Ryu, Lee, & Kim, 2012). Perceived value is defined as a consumer's overall assessment of the utility of a product or service based on perceptions of what is received and what is given (Zeithaml, 1988). Because attached consumers view brands as a part of them, they are more willing to use substantial resources and behaviors to maintain the brand relationship (Park et al., 2010). In other words, service brand attachment may enhance the customers' perceived value, which in turn affects customer citizenship behaviors. According to the aforementioned literature, perceived value may play a mediating role in linking service brand attachment and customer citizenship behaviors. Although previous studies have examined the relationship between brand attachment and customer behaviors, the mechanism underlying the relationship between brand attachment and customer citizenship behaviors remains unknown. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to fill this gap by examining the relationship between brand attachment and customer citizenship behaviors and to clarify the role of perceived value. The results of this study indicated strategic directions that managers can take regarding brand management and customer relationship management.

Conceptual background

Service brand attachment

Branding has become increasingly essential in the service industry. Branding enables consumers to identify companies and differentiate among these companies (Prasad & Dev, 2000). Establishing a strong service brand creates value for both the company and the customer. From the perspective of a company, maintaining a strong brand enhances financial performance as well as the market value of its property (O'Neill & Carlbäck, 2011). From the perspective of a customer, a strong brand can enable a customer to clearly visualize and understand the intangible aspects of the products and services (Kayaman & Arasli, 2007). Furthermore, establishing a strong service brand reduces search costs and perceived risks (Kayaman & Arasli, 2007), provides quality assurance (Prasad & Dev, 2000), and increases brand loyalty (So, King, Sparks, & Wang, 2013) and brand equity (Park et al., 2010).

Customer attachment is critical because it affects the attitudes and behaviors that foster brand profitability and customer lifetime value (Belaid & Behi, 2011; Thomson et al., 2005). Jahn, Gaus, and Kiessling (2012) indicated that brand attachment is a relationship-based concept that reflects an emotion-laden bond between a person and a brand. Park et al. (2010) developed a brand attachment measure that consists of two critical components: brand-self connection and brand prominence. Brand-self connection refers to a bond that involves a cognitive and emotional connection between the brand and the self

(Chaplin & John, 2005). Brand prominence refers to the perceived memory accessibility of a brand to a person (Park, Eisingerich, & Park, 2013). Service brands are likely to be a legitimate active relationship partner (Xie & Heung, 2012). The greater the attachment of a customer to a service brand is, the more effort and resources the customer is willing to commit to maintaining the brand relationship (Park et al., 2010).

Customer citizenship behaviors

Customer citizenship behaviors have received a considerable amount of attention from both academics and practitioners and continue to be a popular topic in service research (Bartkowski & Walsh, 2011; Yi, Gong, & Lee, 2013). Customer citizenship behaviors are voluntary and discretionary customer behaviors beyond those required for service delivery, such as helping another customer, offering useful suggestions to other customers, or providing feedback to a company (Bettencourt, 1997). These actions constitute extra-role behavior, which describes behavior through which customers exceed role expectations and comprises positive, voluntary, helpful, and constructive behaviors toward the firm and other customers (Bove et al., 2009). Groth (2005) indicated that customer citizenship behaviors consist of three dimensions: making recommendations, providing feedback to the organization, and helping other customers. Furthermore, customers with citizenship engage in positive word-of-mouth, buy additional services, provide suggestions related to product or service improvement, make recommendations to others, and show higher price tolerance (Lii & Lee, 2012). Previous studies have shown that customer citizenship behaviors are related to customer satisfaction (Groth, 2005), and customer turnover intention (Revilla-Camacho, Vega-Vázquez, & Cossío-Silva, 2015). Nevertheless, few investigations have examined the antecedents of customer citizenship behaviors in a service context.

Perceived value

Customer-perceived value has gained considerable attention in the service industries and has been recognized as a critical factor in understanding customer behaviors (Chiang & Lee, 2013; Kim, Jin-Sun, & Kim, 2008). Perceived value is a customer's overall evaluation of what is received and what is given (McDougall & Levesque, 2000). Previous studies have suggested that perceived value can be conceptualized as a multidimensional construct (Sheth, Newman, & Gross, 1991; Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). Sheth et al. (1991) approached perceived value by differentiating between several types of value, namely social, emotional, functional, epistemic, and conditional values. Babin, Darden, and Griffin (1994) introduced two types of customer value by developing a scale measuring both hedonic and utilitarian values obtained from the pervasive consumption experience of shopping. Furthermore, Sweeney and Soutar (2001) considered three dimensions of perceived value, namely functional (price and quality), social, and emotional dimensions.

Among the various dimensions of customer-perceived value, hedonic and utilitarian values are most commonly used in recent service literature (Ha & Jang, 2010; Ryu, Han, & Jang, 2010). Hedonic value is defined as an overall assessment of experiential benefits and sacrifices, such as entertainment and escapism (Overby & Lee, 2006). The hedonic dimension of a consumption experience is derived from the uniqueness or symbolic meaning of an offering, or from the emotional arousal and imagery that it evokes

(Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982). Hedonic values are noninstrumental, experiential, affective, and often related to nontangible service or product attributes (Ryu et al., 2010). Utilitarian value refers to an overall assessment of functional benefits and sacrifices (Overby & Lee, 2006). The utilitarian dimension is related to the efficient, task-specific, and economical aspects of products or services.

The mediating role of perceived value

Customer-perceived value has been recognized as a mediating variable in the customer–brand relationship (He, Li, & Harris, 2012; Kim et al., 2008). He et al. (2012) determined that perceived value plays a mediating role in the effects of brand identity on satisfaction and trust. In addition, Kim et al. (2008) observed that perceived value mediates the relationship between brand awareness/association and revisit intention in the hospitality context. Therefore, perceived value can serve as a fundamental connection between customers and brands, and could have a crucial influence on customer behaviors (Tuškej, Golob, & Podnar, 2013).

According to emotional attachment theory (Bowlby, 1979), people with strong emotional attachments to a specific target exhibit specific behaviors such as proximity maintenance and separation distress. When a consumer is attached to a brand, each experience of consumption is perceived as pleasurable, leading to positive emotions and a favorable evaluation of the brand (Belaid & Behi, 2011). These people are also typically committed to preserving their relationship with a brand (Miller, 1997), creating a value perception that the brand is irreplaceable. Brand attachment represents a strong psychological identification to the brand. From a customer perspective, the greater the identification with a brand or an organization is, the more likely the customer is to be content with the organization's products (Papista & Dimitriadis, 2012). Thus, customers with high levels of identification are likely to favorably evaluate the value of an exchange relationship with the brand of interest (He et al., 2012) and therefore enhance the perceived value (So et al., 2013). Furthermore, strong brand attachment tends to satisfy customers' symbolic needs more than their functional needs. According to the basic utility principle of perceived value (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988), customers' attachment to a specific service brand tends to enhance their value perception. Thus, brand attachment is positively related to customers' perceived value.

Furthermore, past studies have also suggested that perceived value is a crucial antecedent of behavioral intentions (Ryu et al., 2012; Williams & Soutar, 2009). When a customer interacts with a company during service delivery, the exchange can be considered a social exchange (Bowen, 1990). According to social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), reciprocal exchange interaction is the key tenet of the behavioral perspective of perceived value. Social exchange theory posits that interpersonal relationships between two parties depend on the perceived rewards and costs involved in social exchanges (Balaji, 2014). Moreover, the value received by one party creates an obligation for the other party to reciprocate (Liu & Mattila, 2015). When customers perceive that a consumption experience has a high level of value, they tend to express positive behavioral intentions and exhibit voluntary behaviors (Ha & Jang, 2010). Therefore, when customers perceive an offer as delivering value, they are likely to exhibit positive voluntary and discretionary behaviors. Park et al. (2010) suggested that the more strongly customers are attached to a specific

brand, the more willing they are to forego personal resources to maintain an ongoing relationship with that brand. Because attached customers are committed to and identify with the goals and values of a company, they are interested in the services of the company and are willing to reciprocate efforts in response to previously perceived benefits (Bettencourt, 1997; Yi & Gong, 2008). According to the aforementioned literature, perceived value may play a mediating role in linking service brand attachment with customer citizenship behaviors. Accordingly, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

H1: Perceived value mediates the relationship between brand attachment and customer citizenship behaviors.

Methodology

Sample and data collection

The research hypotheses were examined using data collected from customers of international tourist hotels in Taiwan. The international tourist hotels are four- or five-star equivalent hotels. According to the Taiwan Tourism Bureau (2014) for the year 2013, 71 international tourist hotels (59 hotels with 100–400 rooms and 12 hotels with 400–700 rooms) were operating in Taiwan. Several well-known hotel brands were included, such as Four Points, Grand Hyatt, Le Méridien, Novotel, Okura, Shangri-La, Sheraton, Westin, and W Hotels. To verify respondents' willingness to complete the questionnaires, the study contacted the public relations managers of all international tourist hotels in Taiwan and requested their assistance. Eighteen hotels agreed to participate in this study. The size of these hotels ranged from 100 to 700 rooms (15 hotels with 100–400 rooms and three hotels with 400–700 rooms). Although the sample might not be representative, the distribution of hotels by scale is proportional to the population. The managers who agreed to participate in the research were provided letters to circulate within the hotel. The letters described the research and the questionnaire to customers, explaining that participation was voluntary and requesting their participation. A total of 406 hotel customers agreed to participate in this survey. A set of questionnaires as well as a stamped and self-addressed return envelope was mailed to the homes of the customers who agreed to participate. To thank the respondents for participating in the survey, each respondent was given a coupon from a well-known Taiwanese coffee chain. The participants mailed the responses directly to the researchers. This process ensured that the participants were protected and that the questionnaires were secure. Of the 406 questionnaires distributed, 299 usable questionnaires were gathered.

Measurement

Brand attachment was measured using a scale developed by Park et al. (2010) that comprises two dimensions: brand-self connection (five items) and brand prominence (five items). The respondents indicated their agreement with each item through a 7-point scale with scores ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*completely*). Higher scores reflected a greater degree of service brand attachment.

The scale developed by Groth (2005) was used to measure customer citizenship behaviors and comprises three dimensions: recommendations (four items), helping customers

(four items), and providing feedback (four items). The respondents ranked their agreement with each item by using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Higher scores reflected a greater degree of customer citizenship behaviors.

Perceived value was measured using a scale developed by Babin et al. (1994) that comprises two dimensions: hedonic (11 items) and utilitarian (four items). The respondents ranked their agreement with each item by using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. Higher scores reflected a greater degree of customer-perceived value.

Questions related to demographic data, such as gender, age, marital status, educational background, personal monthly income, and occupation, were included in the questionnaire. The questionnaire was originally written in English and was then translated into Chinese by the researchers and two native English speakers who worked in the hotel industry. Before finalizing the questionnaire design, back translation was conducted to reduce translation bias, as suggested by Van de Vijver and Hambleton (1996).

Results

Characteristics of the sample

Among the 299 respondents, 133 (44%) were men and 166 (56%) were women. In addition, approximately 50% of the respondents were aged between 31 and 50 years. Education levels were fairly high, with over 88% having been educated at college level or higher. The majority (59%) of the respondents was married. Among the respondents, 25% reported a personal monthly income of over NT\$60,000. Regarding occupation, most respondents (53%) were business workers. Finally, most respondents (61%) indicated they stay at a well-known brand hotel at least 5–10 times a year.

Measurement reliability and validity analysis

To validate the constructs, the research model was examined using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), in which all measurement items are loaded on their expected constructs and the constructs are correlated (Gerbing & Anderson, 1988). Because the chi-square statistic is sensitive to the sample size, other indices were used in the testing models (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2009). In the testing model employed in CFA, all factor loadings were significant ($p < .001$). The values of all indices ($\chi^2 = 1372.57$, $df = 569$, $\chi^2/df = 2.41$, $GFI = .919$, $AGFI = .870$, $IFI = .932$, $NFI = .901$, and $RMSEA = .047$) were higher than the model adaptability standards suggested by Hair et al. (2009) ($\chi^2/df < 5$, $GFI \geq .90$, $AGFI \geq .80$, $IFI \geq .90$, $NFI \geq .90$, and $RMSEA \leq .05$), showing favorable model fit and unidimensional scales. Table 1 shows that the composite reliability ranged from .819 to .944; these values are greater than the standard of 0.6 (Hair et al., 2009). The study employed a set of established procedures to test the convergent validity and discriminant validity of our scales. The average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct was between .531 and .772, which are either equal to or higher than 0.5 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), indicating that the scales had convergent validity. The study measured the discriminant validity by calculating the AVE for all pairs of constructs and comparing this value to the squared correlation between the two constructs of interest. The research results

Table 1. Factor analysis, validity, and reliability.

Dimension	Factor loadings	Composite reliability	AVE
Brand attachment			
Brand-self connection		.944	.772
To what extent is the hotel part of you and who you are	.84		
To what extent do you feel personally connected to the hotel	.89		
To what extent do you feel emotionally bonded to the hotel	.90		
To what extent is the hotel part of you	.93		
To what extent does the hotel say something to other people about who you are	.83		
Brand prominence		.912	.681
To what extent are your thoughts and feelings toward the hotel often automatic, coming to mind seemingly on their own	.90		
To what extent do your thoughts and feelings toward the hotel come to your mind naturally and instantly	.97		
To what extent do your thoughts and feelings toward the hotel come to mind so naturally and instantly that you don't have much control over them	.92		
To what extent does the word the hotel automatically evoke many good thoughts about the past, present, and future	.62		
To what extent do you have many thoughts about the hotel	.65		
Customer citizenship behaviors			
Recommendations		.927	.762
Refer fellow students or coworkers to the hotel	.95		
Recommend the hotel to your family	.90		
Recommend the hotel to your peers	.88		
Recommend the hotel to people interested in the hotel' products /services	.75		
Helping customers		.877	.644
Assist other customers in finding products	.70		
Help others with their shopping	.67		
Teach someone how to use the service correctly	.91		
Explain to other customers how to use the service correctly	.90		
Providing feedback		.925	.758
Fill out a customer satisfaction survey	.80		
Providing helpful feedback to customer service	.98		
Providing information when surveyed by the business	.74		
Inform business about the great service received by an individual employee	.94		
Perceived value			
Hedonic		.944	.607
This hotel accommodations was truly a joy	.81		
I continued to select the hotel, not because I had to, but because I wanted to	.83		
This hotel accommodations truly felt like an escape	.69		
Compared to other things I could have done, the time spent hotel accommodations was truly enjoyable	.77		
I enjoyed being immersed in exciting new environments	.80		
I enjoyed this hotel accommodations for its own sake, not just for the items I may have purchased	.85		
I had a good time because I was able to act on the 'spur-of-the-moment'	.83		
During the hotel accommodations, I felt the excitement of the hunt	.73		
While hotel accommodations, I was able to forget my problems	.73		
While hotel accommodations, I felt a sense of adventure	.69		
This hotel accommodations was no a very nice time out	.82		
Utilitarian		.819	.531
I accomplished just what I wanted to on this hotel accommodations	.76		
I couldn't make a reservation what I really needed	.78		
While hotel accommodations, I found just the item(s) I was looking for	.71		
I was disappointed because I had to go to another store(s) to complete my hotel accommodations	.66		

revealed that the squared correlation between any pair of constructs in all cases was less than the respective AVE of each of the constructs in the pair (see Table 2), indicating that the scales had discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The assessment of the measurement model provided strong evidence of reliability and validity.

Table 2. Means, standard deviations, and correlations of all variables.

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3
1. Brand attachment	4.29	1.14			
2. Customer citizenship behaviors	5.22	.82	.544*** (.296)		
3. Perceived value	4.98	.74	.519*** (.269)	.585*** (.342)	

Note: $n = 299$.

*** $p < .001$.

The numbers in the parenthesis indicate squared correlation.

Common method variance evaluation

Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff (2003) demonstrated that common method variance (CMV) can be processed using procedural and statistical techniques. When using procedural techniques, the test implementer may provide an explanation orally or on the top portion of the questionnaire. The explanation should reassure respondents that the survey is conducted on an anonymous basis and that the results will be provided for the purpose of research only and remain confidential to minimize errors caused by social expectations or tolerance. In addition, questions of different dimensions should be printed on different pages of the questionnaire to create a psychological effect of subject separation.

The possibility of common method bias was tested using Harman's one-factor test (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). The items concerning brand attachment, customer citizenship behaviors, and perceived value were subjected to a principal component factor analysis, which yielded three factors with eigenvalues greater than 1. The cumulative loading was 51.28%, and the factor loading of the first factor was 23.31%. In addition, the study employed CFA to test the fit of a one-factor model and a seven-factor model. The results revealed that the fit of the one-factor model (in which all items were loaded on a single factor) was inferior to that of the seven-factor model ($\chi^2 = 7451.45$, $df = 629$, $\chi^2/df = 11.847$, $GFI = .379$, $AGFI = .306$, $IFI = .423$, $NFI = .402$, and $RMSEA = .191$).

Moreover, the study controlled for the effects of a single unmeasured latent method factor in our analyses. The study compared the measurement model without a CMV factor and with the factor. The fit indices of the model with the CMV factor are listed as follows: $\chi^2 = 40.787$, $df = 11$, $\chi^2/df = 3.707$, $GFI = .961$, $AGFI = .900$, $IFI = .956$, $NFI = .941$, and $RMSEA = .049$. A comparison of the two models indicated that the change in fit indices was nonsignificant. The factor loadings of these items remained significant. In both the models, $\Delta\chi^2 = 7410.663$, $\Delta df = 618$, indicating a differential significance of $p < .000$. This result indicated that the null hypothesis was rejected; hence, the two models differed. According to the results, CMV was not a major problem for the data (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

Hypothesis testing

Table 2 lists the means, standard deviations, and correlations of all variables. Brand attachment was positively related to perceived value ($r = .519$, $p < .01$) and customer citizenship behaviors ($r = .544$, $p < .01$). Furthermore, customer-perceived value was positively related

to customer citizenship behaviors ($r = .585, p < .01$). The results provided an initial examination of the proposed relationships.

Structural equation modeling (SEM) was performed using the maximum likelihood estimation method to investigate the relationships among brand attachment, perceived value, and customer citizenship behaviors. Figure 1 shows the standardized path coefficients resulting from testing the proposed structural model. Within the overall model, the estimates of the structural coefficients provided the basis for testing the proposed hypotheses. The goodness of fit indices ($\chi^2/df = 3.708, p < .001$; GFI = .961; AGFI = .900; IFI = .956; NFI = .941; RMSEA = .048) supported the appropriateness of the structural model (Gerbing & Anderson, 1988; Hair et al., 2009). The results of SEM indicated that the standardized coefficients for the paths from brand attachment to perceived value ($\beta = .74, p < .001$) were positively significant, and the standardized coefficients for the paths from perceived value to customer citizenship behaviors ($\beta = .81, p < .001$) were positively significant. However, the standardized coefficient for the path from brand attachment to customer citizenship behaviors ($\beta = .12, p > .05$) was nonsignificant.

To further understand the factors affecting customer citizenship behaviors, the study proceeded with direct- and indirect-effect analysis of customer citizenship behaviors. Brand attachment exerted a direct effect on customer citizenship behaviors with a

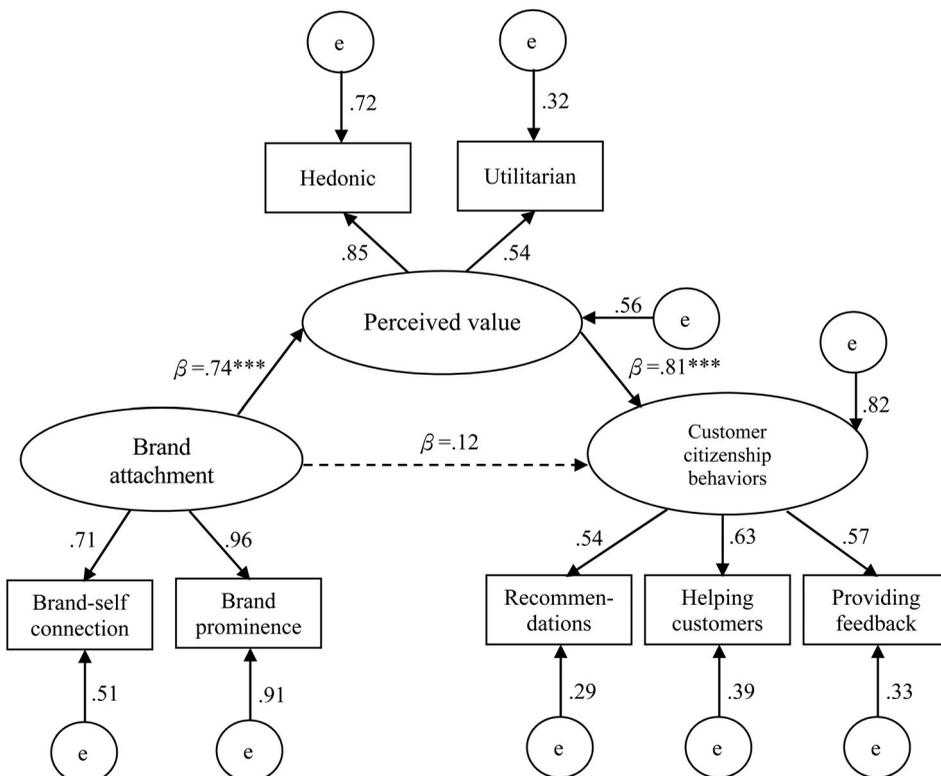


Figure 1. Structural path estimates model.

Note: Dotted lines indicate nonsignificant paths.

*** $p < .001$

value of .12, and one path indicating an indirect effect with a perceived value of .60 was observed. The total effect was .72. Furthermore, perceived value exerted a direct effect on customer citizenship behaviors (.81), and the total effect was .81. Hence, $(.74 \times .81) > (.12)$, and perceived value mediates the relationship between brand attachment and customer citizenship behaviors.

The Sobel test was used to examine the significance of the mediating roles of perceived value (Preacher, Rucker, & Hayes, 2007). The Sobel test was used to determine whether the indirect effect of brand attachment on customer citizenship behaviors through perceived value differed from zero. If a z-score is greater than 1.96, then the hypothesis regarding the indirect effect is substantiated. As shown in Table 3, the results of the Sobel test indicated that the mediating role of perceived value on the relationship between brand attachment and customer citizenship behaviors was significant ($z = 3.91 > 1.96, p < .001$). Thus, H1 was supported. Perceived value completely mediated the relationship between brand attachment and customer citizenship behaviors.

Discussion and managerial implications

Branding and brand management have been well-recognized management priorities and strategic aims for companies for many years (Dolbec & Chebat, 2013). However, little academic attention has been paid to the attachment of customers to a specific brand (Park et al., 2010), particularly in the service industry. This study addressed relevant gaps in literature and supported the relevance of service brand attachment and customer extra-role behaviors. The findings suggest that when customers are emotionally attached to a service brand, they tend to have a more favorable judgment of the brand's overall benefits and overall assessment of the utility. Such positive service brand evaluation in turn determines customer citizenship behaviors associated with the company. This study contributes to service management literature by demonstrating that service brand attachment has an indirect effect on customer citizenship behaviors through customer judgments of perceived value. Regarding the service industry, perceived value is the mechanism that explains how service brand attachment is associated with customer citizenship behaviors. This study emphasizes the importance of the value perceived by customers. The study extended the theoretical foundations of brand attachment and customer citizenship behaviors in the consumer behavior literature by applying them in a service context.

The research findings provide empirical evidence that brand attachment is positively correlated with customers' perceived value. Customers with high brand attachment were more likely to describe positive perceived value than those with low brand attachment were. The present study was conducted in response to the suggestions of Belaid and Behi (2011) that few studies have investigated the outcomes of brand attachment. On the basis of the attachment theory, the present study extended extant research

Table 3. Indirect effect of brand attachment on customer citizenship behaviors through perceived value (Sobel z-test results).

Path	β	SE	Test statistic (z)	Std. Error	p-value
Brand attachment → Perceived value	.51	.05	3.91***	.07	.000
Perceived value → Customer citizenship behaviors	.55	.13			

*** $p < .001$.

(Kim et al., 2008) by emphasizing the brand attachment–perceived value relationship in a service context. As expected, perceived value was positively related to customer citizenship behaviors. People feel obligated to reciprocate when they receive benefits from others. According to social exchange theory, a high degree of customer-perceived value enhances and positively affects customer citizenship behaviors. This finding appears to support the statements of Dall’Olmo Riley and De Chernatony (2000, p. 140), who asserted that the customer–brand relationship can be regarded as ‘the reciprocity, mutual exchange and fulfillment of promises’. The results also suggest that customer-perceived value is a crucial determinant of customer citizenship behaviors in the service industry.

Furthermore, our results indicate that perceived value completely mediates the relationship between service brand attachment and customer citizenship behaviors. The emotional attachment of customers with a service brand can influence cognitive evaluations. Customers exhibiting high levels of attachment and identification are likely to evaluate the value of an exchange relationship with the brand of interest favorably, thereby enhancing customers’ perceived value (He et al., 2012; So et al., 2013). In addition, perceived value is a subjective evaluation of gain and loss in an exchange relationship (Zeithaml, 1988). Customers feel obliged to reciprocate by engaging in citizenship behaviors that benefit an organization (Yi & Gong, 2008). Consequently, the findings of the current research support the role of perceived value in mediating the relationship between service brand attachment and customer citizenship behaviors. The study proposed that customer-perceived value is a criterion for determining how brand attachment influences customer citizenship behaviors.

The results indicated that brand attachment is not positively related to customer citizenship behaviors. Previous studies have proposed a conceptual model to examine the mediating role of customer-perceived value in the service context (He et al., 2012; Kim et al., 2008). The results of the present study indicated that perceived value completely mediates the relationship between brand attachment and customer citizenship behaviors. Thus, customer citizenship behaviors are not conducted on the basis of a blindly developed attachment to the company, but are based on whether the service of the company satisfies the customers’ subjective measurement of perceived benefits and costs, which constitute customer-perceived value. Such results confirm that strong service brand attachment alone does not affect customer citizenship behaviors. Managers should pay attention to customer perceptions of social exchange relationships.

The findings of this study have several managerial implications. First, this study offers service managers practicable insights into how to promote customer citizenship behaviors. Service firms should focus on creating and maintaining affective relationships between customers and their brands. For consumers who are heavy brand users, the advantages they derive from service organizations’ investing in a positive brand relationship with consumers should be immediately recognizable. Specifically, strategies for emotional attachment may involve giving customers a strong sense of belonging to the service brand through exclusive member club functions, positive service experiences during visits, and the sharing of brand history. Second, customers have a considerable influence on the success of service brands. Their voluntary behaviors toward a service brand can be a valuable asset. Service brand managers should build positive connections with their customers’ self-concepts to promote customer citizenship behaviors. Managers might

consider approaches to encourage service brand attachment through private online communities based on the customer's reward status. Such programs not only foster customer relationship but are also an effective avenue for displaying customer citizenship behaviors among exclusive members (e.g. helping others find information, taking the time to help other customers, and advising other customers on correct use).

Third, the results of this study show that service brand attachment alone does not lead to customer citizenship behaviors. The mediation effect of perceived value on service brand attachment's effect on customer citizenship behaviors suggests that improving consumer brand attachment is insufficient for enhancing customer citizenship behaviors; it should be accompanied by strategic management of value perceptions. Moreover, managers should consider the effect of service brand attachment on perceived value when the aim is to promote customer citizenship behaviors. Therefore, service brand managers should place greater emphasis on total customer value management programs and constantly monitor customers' perceived value of the service brand. For example, managers who are aware of customer service regarding the quality of a package (i.e. its utilitarian and hedonic values) should be able to intensify customer attachment. By continuing to strengthen tangible and intangible service quality and experience quality, managers can introduce the service environment perceived by customers to have the highest value. Service brand managers must create positive customer perceptions of the service consumption experience. These strategies strengthen customers' perceived value of the package, thereby increasing customer citizenship behaviors.

Limitations and future research directions

The present study had several limitations. First, samples for the primary survey were drawn from the hospitality industry, which might have limited the generalizability of the results to other industries. Future studies can conduct comparisons in different industries and more in-depth discussions on the relationship between brand attachment and customer citizenship behaviors. Future studies can explore other segments of the service industry, such as restaurants, airlines, and travel agencies. Second, the present study cannot be generalized to all populations because the researchers investigated hotels in Taiwan only. Furthermore, more female than male respondents participated in this study. The characteristics of the sample may have affected the results of the study and the extrapolation of results. A broader survey of countries can be conducted in future research to empirically validate the relationships examined in this study. Third, the cross-sectional research design limited the extent to which the causal status of the variables could be inferred. A longitudinal research design is required to examine the causal relationships among brand attachment, perceived value, and customer citizenship behaviors. Finally, this research revealed that customer-perceived value exerts a mediating effect on the relationship between brand attachment and customer citizenship behaviors. Additional studies may consider other moderators of the brand attachment–customer citizenship behaviors relationship, such as customer trust and commitment. The aforementioned observation indicates that contextual and situational variables may be moderators. Future research should investigate this possibility.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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