



INFLUENCE OF CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT ON WORD-OF-MOUTH: EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE FROM THE TOURISM INDUSTRY IN VIETNAM

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ABSTRACT

Article History

Received: 23 February 2021

Revised: 25 March 2021

Accepted: 10 May 2021

Published: 7 June 2021

Keywords

Consumer engagement

Word-of-mouth

Consumer experience

Trust

Service quality

Multi-group.

The current research aims to provide an in-depth understanding of CE and its nomological network in the Vietnamese tourism service industry. To do that, data were collected from domestic visitors to Phu Quoc Island and were analyzed employing SPSS 20 and AMOS 20. The results show that, CE is considered as a construct combining psychological state and behavior intention which is inextricably interactive to behavior constructs (word-of-mouth) and psychological constructs (consumer experience, trust, and service quality). The findings reveal that different experiences and service quality during the consumption process enhance positive influences on CE, in turn, consolidating the trust of the consumer and spreading great word-of-mouth. However, the relationship between consumer trust and word-of-mouth was detected to be not significant. Besides, integrating gender in the model revealed the difference in gender do various influence the relationship between CE and its antecedents and consequences. These results reveal some important implications for marketing theory groundwork and CE literature as to how CE is conceptualized and established from a particular context and what potential antecedences and outcomes are likely to be predicted.

Contribution/Originality: The paper contributes the first logical analysis in integrating service quality and consumer experience to investigate CE in complex tourism settings now. This has helped us to gain a deeper understanding of the important role of CE in this service.

1. INTRODUCTION

The explosion of information technology has given people a lot of opportunities accessing useful information with them many choices about a product or service, so consumer demands are creasing higher. Meanwhile, the increase in the number of suppliers makes the competition to maintain and attract customers of these businesses increasingly fierce. The slogan "the customer is God of business" has become an extremely important criterion for success in maintaining and strengthening the relationship between customers and businesses. Businesses increasingly focus on providing appropriate strategies with consumer requirements and always find out and evaluate the factors explaining the intentions and behaviors of consumers. However, traditional marketing structures such as SAT and CL seem to be limited in predicting and measuring customer behavior (Sureshchandar, Chandrasekharan, & Anantharaman, 2002). According to Ray, Kim, and Morris (2014) consumer satisfaction is the emotional response fulfilling of desire but only leading to normative behavior exchanging and, customer loyalty is an actual effort to consistently repurchase or recollect a favorite brand; CE can strengthen and sustainably enhance consumer loyalty (Patterson, Yu, & De Ruyter, 2006; So, King, Sparks, Wang, & Kandampully, 2016) and it is a

leading psychological state allowing consumers to engage in beneficial behaviors to a particular brand or target (Ray et al., 2014). Therefore, an optimal integrated structure for explaining and predicting consumer behavior intentions that have been focused recent studies is CE. Sedley and Perks (2008) suggests that consumer engagement is seen both as an important strategic imperative generating and sustaining a valuable competitive advantage, and as a significant predictor of future business performance. Specifically, Neff (2007) views consumer engagement as a primary driver of sales growth, while Voyles (2007) suggests consumer engagement enhances profitability.

Tourism development has become a new direction for the sustainable development of many countries around the world. Following the trend, Vietnam is also building an economic structure in which tourism is a key economic sector as published in the 9th Communist Party convention document. According to the General Statistics Office of Vietnam, the GDP of the first 6 months of 2019 is estimated to increase by 6.76% over the same period last year, of which the second-quarter growth is estimated at 6.71%. This figure is lower than 7.05% in the same period in 2018 but higher than the average increase of first 6 months of 2011-2017. This shows that the growth in quantity and quality of Vietnamese tourism service enterprises is increasing considerably.

In fact, the engagement concept engagement has been applied in a number of disciplines including information systems (Wagner & Majchrzak, 2006) education (Lutz, Guthrie, & Davis, 2006) psychology (Bakker, Hakanen, Demerouti, & Xanthopoulou, 2007) and management (Fleming, Coffman, & Harter, 2005). However, some considerable disagreement still remains over not only what engagement is and but how it be conceptualized also (Hollebeek, Conduit, & Brodie, 2016). Furthermore, according to Hollebeek (2011) and So et al. (2016) most studies of consumer engagement are still in its nascent stage, being mainly restricted to conceptual papers and lacks empirical testing. The nomological network of consumer engagement is still in its growing development gradation of exploring conceptual guidelines on its potential antecedents and outcomes (Brodie, Hollebeek, Jurić, & Ilić, 2011; Hollebeek, 2011) however, most validations of these relationships have not been empirical to date (Dwivedi, 2015). Also, the influence of demographic variables (e.g. gender) on these relationships has not been evaluated fully. In this study, two suitable factors, consumer experience and service quality, were chosen to explain the antecedent of CE, and two constructs (trust and word-of-mouth) were also selected as comprehensive constructs for its consequences. The model will also be able to strengthen the explanatory power when moderating factors (gender) are added (Chin, Marcolin, & Newsted, 2003). Thus, this paper promotes a new integrated research conceptual framework in looking for the role of consumer engagement to positive comment and examining the causality relation among CE with consumer experience, service quality, trust, and word-of-mouth. Also, this research assesses the influence of gender on all proposed relationships. The research result will assist companies in identifying foundation factors in establishing interactive and sustainable relationships between them and consumers.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

2.1. Consumer Engagement

Engagement, in recent years, has become an interesting research topic in both social science theory, and management & marketing. Although there are many empirical studies on this new topic, there is no consensus on what engagement concept is. First, Engagement has been defined by Kahn (1990) as “the simultaneous employment and expression of a person's 'preferred self' in task behaviors that promote connections to work and to others, personal presence (physical, cognitive, and emotional) and active, full performances” (p. 700). After that, topics related to engagement were increasingly expanded as employee engagement (Demerouti, Bakker, de Jonge, Janssen, & Schaufeli, 2001) student engagement (Fredricks, Filsecker, & Lawson, 2016) brand engagement (Hollebeek, 2011) student engagement (Quynh, Hoai, Adang, & Thu, 2021) consumer engagement (Brodie, Ilic, Juric, & Hollebeek, 2013) a media engagement (Habibi, Laroche, & Richard, 2014) and customer engagement (Hollebeek, 2013; Quynh, Nha, Hoai, & Gidu, 2020a) but with consumer engagement being perhaps the foundation concept of the engagement topic

(Brodie et al., 2013). The authors suggested that “consumer engagement is a context-dependent, psychological state, multidimensional concept comprising cognitive, emotional, and/ or behavioral dimensions, and plays a central role in the process of relational exchange where other relational concepts are engagement antecedents and/or consequences in iterative engagement processes within the brand community”. By contrast, Vivek, Beatty, Dalela, and Morgan (2014) define “consumer engagement” as “the intensity of an individual's participation and connection with the organization's offerings and activities initiated by either the customer or the organization”. This study was developed based on Brodie et al. (2013) and suggested that consumer engagement is a multidimensional concept repeated in behavioral, emotional, and absorption dimensions to motivate the behavioral intention of the consumer. Inconsistency exists not only in the way consumer engagement is defined but also in its dimension. While the multidimensional perspective is dominant in studies related to engagement (Vivek et al., 2014) some researchers still proposed that it is a unidimensional conceptualization (Bijmolt et al., 2010; Doorn et al., 2010; Sprott, Czellar, & Spangenberg, 2009). Specific dimensions often addressed in the multifaceted perspective include behavior, emotional and cognitive dimensions (Cheung, Lee, & Jin, 2011; Hollebeek, 2011; Vivek et al., 2014) and Greve (2014) suggested dedication, enthusiasm, and absorption; and Quynh (2019) proposed cognition, vigor and emotional dimensions. In addition, prior literature revealed that subject of engagement is either customer or consumer, while its object is more diverse such as a medium, a marketplace, a website, or a brand. Reviewing prior literature also shows that the traditional factors often affecting the consumer engagement are perceived value, service quality, involvement, or participation. That means actual consumer experience of a particular product or service will affect their level of engagement. Meanwhile, the outcomes of CE showed that the level of consumer engagement will lead to their future behavioral intentions such as willingness to pay, positive word of mouth, and repurchase.

2.2. Research Hypotheses

Exploring related-engagement studies indicated that this topic is receiving great interest from practitioners and academics. Furthermore, it is recognized that it plays an important role in brand management (Hollebeek, Glynn, & Brodie, 2014) and is related to some traditional marketing structures such as service quality, perceived value, satisfaction, and loyalty.

One of the important factors influencing it discovered from previous studies is the quality of service that according to Dodds (1991) becomes a growing concern to the consumer. The service quality definition of Zeithaml and Bitner (2003) has widely used in related-service works. They suggested that quality of service is the consumer's evaluation about the overall services provided, and it is also considered “how well the service satisfies or exceeds customer expectations on a consistent basis” (Wu, 2014). Moreover, the relationship between service quality and CE is also discovered, in which the dependence level of CE on quality is relatively large and in the context of the restaurant service industry, it is one of the main factors that determine the success of this industry (Shekarchizadeh, Rasli, & Hon-Tat, 2011). The assessment of the impact of service quality on CE has been conducted based on several products and specific contexts. For mobile value-added services, Kuo, Wu, and Deng (2009) displayed that once customers are willing to accept higher quality products, it is likely to lead a behavioral intention (e.g. CE). Similar results are shown in the study of Claussen, Kretschmer, and Mayrhofer (2013) with mobile applications on the Facebook platform. Hapsari, Clemes, and Dean (2017) also indicated that service quality affects not only satisfaction but the cohesion of customers in the airline industry. In the restaurant service industry, a new study of Quynh (2019) demonstrated that by providing good service quality to the consumer such as a difference in service style of direct contact staff, quality food, etc. ...service quality will help managers to maintain better CE. Stemming from this logic, the first hypothesis is proposed:

H1: *Service quality will have a positive effect on CE.*

The dynamic business environment contributes to offering consumers the opportunity to experience more realistically in the service process, to co-create value. As a result, the interaction between customers and suppliers

increases more that leads to the ability of consumers to more engage with businesses. According to Nysveen and Pedersen (2014) therefore, consumer experience and CE are very important marketing constructs in evaluating the interactive nature of services. Experiences are considered as part of consumer behavior regarding emotions, fantasies, and different perceptions of consumers (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). According to Gentile, Spiller, and Noci (2007) “The customer experience originates from a set of interactions between a customer and a product, a company, or part of its organization, which provoke a reaction. This experience is strictly personal and implies the customer’s involvement at different levels” (p. 397) or “Customer Experience is the internal and subjective response customers have to any direct or indirect contact with a company” (Meyer & Schwager, 2007).

Consumption experiences have been shown to have a positive effect on consumer engagement in prior literatures. Vallaster and Wallpach (2013) found that interactions between service providers and customers will co-create the brand and improve the experience with the brand, Gambetti, Graffigna, and Biraghi (2012) and Spena, Caridà, Colurcio, and Melia (2012) also demonstrated that positive consumer experience stimulates the generation of connectedness between the provider and the consumers, which leads to enhancing their engagement with the provider. Moreover, according to Wong and Tsai (2010) consumer behavior becomes more complex, hence, companies are having tendency focusing on the value of the experience for the consumer, realizing that generating benefits for both consumer and themselves (Baka, 2016) enhance engagement of consumers. These two structures are highly correlated in retailing literature, however, an empirical work investigating the influence of consumer experience on engagement in the tourism service industry seems to be lacking. Therefore, it is expected that consumer experiences can directly affect CE. Next hypothesis is proposed:

H₂: Consumer experience will have positive effect on CE.

According to Morgan and Hunt (1994) the trust is a traditional important concept for managing customer relationships and has also become a popular topic investigating consumer behavior. Trust has been identified as an important component that contributes to the long-term success of a business and has been profitable for many different industries such as electronics (Atuahene-Gima & Li, 2002) luxury goods (Chiou & Droge, 2006) and financial services (Aurier & N’Goala, 2010). Consumer trust was defined as the ability to depend on a commercial accomplice for which he or she has confidence (Moorman, Deshpande, & Zaltman, 1993) or it is “in the trade accomplice’s unwavering quality and integrity and it is considered to be a key intervening and developing the relationships trades” (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). It has been proven in several studies that consumer trust and WOM (word-of-mouth) are consequences of consumer engagement (Hollebeek, 2011) furthermore, exploring studies in different contexts revealed that trust is a crucial outcome of CE, such as restaurant industrial context in Vietnam (Quynh et al., 2020a) tourism services in London (Rajah, Marshall, & Nam, 2008) and in Australia (So et al., 2016). However, these results are contradictory. Especially, on social media platforms, customer-other customers’ relationships have an negative impact on brand trust (Habibi et al., 2014) Therefore, according to Hollebeek (2011) empirical testing of this relationship in different context is required. Based on that logic, next hypotheses are proposed:

H₃ Consumer Engagement will have a positive influence on consumer trust.

Word of mouth is considered one of the most crucial consequences that can be measured by companies (Walsh & Mitchell, 2010). Also, it is assessed “as key relationship marketing outcomes” in the marketing literature (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, & Gremler, 2002). According to Ahmad, Vveinhardt, and Ahmed (2014) word of mouth has a potent perception in the consumers’ mind that could be practiced every time - It can be a part of social communication. Hence, they defined that “Word of mouth is the way of sharing ideas, believes and experiences among each other” and when people always share honest ideas, that means they are also creating word-of-mouth (Balter, 2004). The significant relationship between word of mouth and CE was found in studies of Kumar et al. (2010); Vivek., Beatty, and Morgan (2012) and Dwivedi, Wilkie, Johnson, and Weerawardena (2016). According to Vivek et al. (2012) repurchasing and conveying positive word-of-mouth communication are the potential outcomes

of CE. Consumers who engage a product/ brand are more likely to convey WOM for that product/brand to others (Walsh & Mitchell, 2010). Similarly, Cheung et al. (2011) believed that when consumers are willingly investing physical, cognitive, and emotional efforts into an online social media platform, they have the propensity posting great word-of-mouth (Sivadas & Jindal, 2017). Moreover, for a brand, the more engaged customers are, the more positive word of mouth they provide, so they play as brand advocates (Walsh & Mitchell, 2010). Cheung et al. (2011) and, Halaszovich and Nel (2017) also suggested the positive relationship between two CE's dimensions including affection and activation and word of mouth. Walsh and Mitchell (2010) showed that word of mouth is inextricably linked with trust. Based on that logic, next hypotheses are proposed:

H₁: Consumer Engagement will have a positive influence on consumers' WOM.

H₂: Consumer trust will have a positive influence on consumers' WOM.

2.3. Multi-Group Effect

Many academics and practitioners have conducted evaluating the distinct roles of men and women in different contexts based on the most popular theory of Eagly, Wood, and Diekmann (2000) -Social Role Theory. Their studies have shown that men and woman are distinct in terms of product evaluations (McDaniel & Kinney, 1998) their information processing styles (Dubé & Morgan, 1996) decision-making processes (Venkatesh & Morris, 2000) and solving a problem (Mitchell & Walsh, 2004). Moreover, Kamboj and Rahman (2016); Kamboj and Rahman (2017) cognized that gender is a moderating variable influencing on the relationships among various marketing structures. However, research results are still inconsistent among different perspectives such as financial service industry (Paswan, Spears, Hasty, & Ganesh, 2004) retail banking sector (Karatepe, 2011) and Internet service (Sanchez-Franco, Ramos, & Velicia, 2009). In this study's context, therefore, we predict that the difference of consumers' gender will differently impact on the relationship between CE and its antecedents and consequences.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Objectives of the Research

Stemming from the limitations and recommendations of previous studies, it is believed that CE-related issues need to be shed more light. First, according to Brodie et al. (2011) CE's nature is context-dependent. Although exploring its conceptualizations, antecedents, and consequence have been discussed in other types of the service industry and some areas in the world, the research regarding tourism service industry seems to be ignored in Vietnam. Second, the borderless competitive market has motivated companies to create differentiated experiential values (Baka, 2016) to maintain engaged consumers. However, empirical studies regarding its effect on CE also appear to be quite vague and need to be explored more.

In this study, therefore, three major objects are proposed:

- 1 Offer a specific definition of CE for this context.
- 2 Explore factors and their influence levels on CE in tourism service industrial context in Vietnam.
- 3 Examine the moderating roles of consumer gender on the relationships among these marketing constructs.

3.2. Methodology

3.2.1. Sample

Research models and hypotheses will be tested through the use of SPSS 20.0 and AMOS 20.0. Questions about each concept of research were prepared and data were collected using a convenience survey sample of 415 Vietnamese domestic customers. The respondents were visitors to Phu Quoc Island. Phu Quoc Island was chosen as the specific context of the study since it is one of the most famous tourist destinations in Vietnam.

After removing invalid samples, the remaining 380 valid ones were adopted for further analysis. Empirical studies and data collection were conducted in Vietnam, and the back-translation method proposed by Brislin (1986) was applied. This study was performed at the end of 2019.

3.2.2. Measures

To measure the relationships in the model, the items were borrowed from prior studies to set up an appropriate questionnaire to the tourism context in Vietnam. Besides, to ensure the valid word and content of each item, it has been carefully evaluated and checked by Vietnamese marketing experts. The seven-point Likert scale (ranked from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”) was adopted measuring the items proposed.

Table-1. The source of the measurement tool.

Research variable	Number of questions	Measuring factors	Source
SQ	7	The modern-looking facilities Professional staff	Puriwat and Tripopsakul (2014)
EX	7	Memorable memory visually Appealing environment	Garg, Rahman, and Qureshi (2014)
Trust	7	Honest and sincere Confidence and certainty	Delgado-Ballester, Munuera-Aleman, and Yague-Guillen (2003)
CE	15	Immersed in the content Excited mood Enthusiastic involved	Algesheimer, Dholakia, and Herrmann (2005) Vivek (2009)
WOM	7	Encourage friends Spread a good word	Carroll and Ahuvia (2006)

4. RESULTS

4.1. Measurement Model Assessment

The elimination of invalid answers maintained 380 of the 415 survey responses were used to analyze. First, it is essential to evaluate the respondents' demographic characteristics. While most of the visitors were female, accounted for 76% of sample size, male only 24%. Among the respondents, 25% aged below 35, 45.5% were between the ages of 35 and 45, and remaining 29.5% were above 45 ages. Most respondents, the majority of respondents (62.5%) have income from 8 to 12 million VND, 18% of the respondents have income quite low (under 5 million VND).

According to Fornell and Larcker (1981) examining the composite reliability for proposed constructs, such as service quality (SQ), consumer experience (EX), CE, word of mouth (WOM), and trust, firstly, will be conducted through the measurement model (CFA) and the structural equation modeling analyses.

As shown in Table 2, after removing the invalid items (CE3, EX3, SQ7, TRUST3, WOM6), the composite reliability of these constructs was found to be higher than 0.70 (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 1998) thus, guaranteed an adequate value including SQ (0.905), EX(0.906), CE(0.953), WOM (0.944), and Trust (0.901). All items also have significantly standardized loading value in their targeted constructs higher than 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978). Besides, through the specific loadings of items convergent validity was examined. According to Anderson and Gerbing (1988) with posited underlying construct, when each loading indicator is greater than the twice standard error, convergent validity may be evidenced. All fit indices of the measurement model are within the recommended level of Hu and Bentler (1999). Specifically, $\chi^2=1781.108$, $df = 652$, and $\chi^2/df = 2.7322$, CFI = 0.925, GFI = 0.846, TLI = 0.929, IFI = 0.944 and RMSEA = 0.058. This implies that there is an adequate fit between the measurement model and its observed data.

Table-2. CFAs' results within the five latent factors.

Indicator	Direction	Construct	Standardized Loading	S.E.	C.R.	P	CR	AVE
CE1	<---	CE	0.746				0.954	0.598
CE8	<---	CE	0.846	0.047	20.115	***		
CE12	<---	CE	0.808	0.05	19.096	***		
CE9	<---	CE	0.824	0.045	19.539	***		
CE4	<---	CE	0.8	0.048	18.866	***		
CE6	<---	CE	0.72	0.051	16.755	***		
CE14	<---	CE	0.766	0.046	17.973	***		
CE15	<---	CE	0.721	0.056	16.777	***		
CE2	<---	CE	0.736	0.051	17.181	***		
CE5	<---	CE	0.735	0.053	17.162	***		
CE7	<---	CE	0.795	0.047	18.732	***		
CE13	<---	CE	0.793	0.047	18.694	***		
CE11	<---	CE	0.745	0.045	17.421	***		
CE10	<---	CE	0.774	0.045	18.168	***		
WOM7	<---	WOM	0.828				0.928	0.686
WOM4	<---	WOM	0.736	0.022	40.556	***		
WOM1	<---	WOM	0.927	0.038	27.422	***		
WOM3	<---	WOM	0.944	0.041	28.184	***		
WOM5	<---	WOM	0.758	0.047	19.971	***		
WOM2	<---	WOM	0.75	0.039	19.493	***		
EX1	<---	EX	0.887				0.907	0.621
EX6	<---	EX	0.875	0.035	27.366	***		
EX4	<---	EX	0.79	0.037	22.705	***		
EX7	<---	EX	0.74	0.041	20.345	***		
EX2	<---	EX	0.749	0.039	20.749	***		
EX5	<---	EX	0.665	0.04	17.308	***		
SQ1	<---	SQ	0.903				0.907	0.621
SQ3	<---	SQ	0.836	0.039	25.507	***		
SQ2	<---	SQ	0.779	0.04	22.438	***		
SQ6	<---	SQ	0.768	0.04	21.887	***		
SQ5	<---	SQ	0.724	0.046	19.857	***		
SQ4	<---	SQ	0.7	0.042	18.842	***		
TRUST4	<---	TRUST	0.867				0.897	0.954
TRUST5	<---	TRUST	0.755	0.042	19.828	***		
TRUST2	<---	TRUST	0.811	0.042	22.1	***		
TRUST6	<---	TRUST	0.783	0.041	20.972	***		
TRUST1	<---	TRUST	0.731	0.042	18.934	***		
TRUST7	<---	TRUST	0.659	0.044	16.285	***		

To examine the meaning of a measure, it is important to determine discriminant validation (Heeler & Ray, 1972). When one measure is not highly correlated with another that it will be different, discriminant validity is determined (Campbell, 1960). By comparing AVE (average variance extracted) for each construct with r^2 (the squared correlation between two constructs), the discriminant validity can be assessed. Fornell and Larcker (1981) suggest that discriminant validity is supported when r^2 is less than AVE estimates value in the items.

Table-3. Discriminant validity of constructs.

Research constructs	Correlations				
	EX	TRUST	SQ	CE	WOM
EX	0.621				
TRUST	0.141	0.594			
SQ	0.144	0.100	0.621		
CE	0.445	0.173	0.234	0.598	
WOM	0.562	0.076	0.217	0.481	0.686

As shown in Table 3, the model constructs' discriminant validity is supported.

4.2. Structural Model Analysis

Testing the proposed framework was conducted by employing Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). According to the specific fit indices derive from the proposed Model, results showed that the structural model seems to be consistent with the observed data because all these indicators were found to be within the proposed levels.

Specifically, the relative Chi-square/df (2.899) was within the suggested range. The TLI, CFI, and IFI scores (0.912, 0.918 and 0.919) respectively) achieved the requirement, indicating close to a good fit index. The values of the RMSEA, GFI were 0.061 and 0.837, respectively, suggesting a good fit between the data and the structures. After considering sample size, these fit indices were quite sufficient and supportive that the proposed structural model presents appropriate data and could be employed explaining the hypotheses in this study.

The results illustrate that all proposed relationships are positively significant, without the relationship between Trust and WOM. First, as expected, the result display that the hypotheses H1 and H2 ($\beta = 0.476$, and $\beta = 0.179$, $p < 0.01$, respectively) was detected to be insignificant, that is consumer experience and service quality did influence on CE. That means, these hypotheses are supported. CE was also significantly related to trust and word-of-mouth ($\beta = 0.195$, and $\beta = 0.527$, $p < 0.01$, respectively), supporting hypotheses H3 and H4. Finally, in contrast to the proposed hypothesis, the result indicates that the hypothesis H5 ($\beta = -0.017$, $p = 0.684$) was detected to be NOT significant, that means trust did influence on WOM, Hypothesis 5 was rejected. In short, the findings reveal that different experiences and service quality during the consumption process enhance positive influences on CE, in turn, consolidating to the trust of the consumer and spreading great word-of-mouth.

4.3. Multi-Group Effects

According to Deng and Yuan (2015) Multi-group SEM plays a crucial role in assessing measurement invariance and comparing among groups that means, the multi-group SEM provides a powerful tool for evaluating similarities and differences between distinct populations (Cole & Maxwell, 1985; Vandenberg & Lance, 2000). In this study, the different effect of male and female is tested by comparing the impact of the male group "group 1" with the female group "group 2" on the proposed relationships.

In order to find differences between groups and identify pairs that differ significantly, it is necessary to check the critical rate for pair comparisons of groups that show up by regression weights. The result is presented in Table 4.

Table-4. Gender hypothesis comparison.

Causal Path	Coefficients		Critical Ratios for differences between parameters	Result
	Group 1	Group 2		
SQ -> CE	0.395***	0.506***	1.359	No Difference
EX -> CE	0.431***	0.233**	-1.8239*	Difference
CE-> TRUST	0.145**	0.209***	0.075	No Difference
CE -> WOM	0.249***	-0.024	-2.456**	Difference
TRUST-> WOM	0.095	-0.008	-1.049	No Difference

Note: ***p < 0.01, ** p < 0.05, * p < 0.1.

There are 2 out of 5 hypotheses being affected by gender due to the fact that z-score's absolute values are higher than the critical of 1.65 (Bollen, 1990). For the relationship between consumer experience and CE where female consumers yielded higher coefficients ($\beta=0.431$) than the male consumers ($\beta= 0.233$), the difference is significant ($z\text{-score}=-1.824 > \pm 1.65$, $p < 0.1$) which reveals that for female consumers' experience factor accounts for more influence than the male on the level of CE. In addition, for the relationship between CE and WOM where woman yielded higher coefficients ($\beta=0.249$) than the male ($\beta=-0.024$), the difference is significant ($z\text{-score}=-2.456 > \pm 1.96$, $p < 0.05$) which demonstrates that mans' engagement accounts for less influence than woman on the level of WOM. There is no significant difference elicited for the rest of the relations between two consumer groups, male and female.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1. Discussion

This study aims to evaluate the impact of service quality and, consumer experience on CE, which in turn impacts trust and willingness to spread word-of-mouth. Results revealed that consumer experience and service quality are significant antecedents of CE, which in turn influence trust and willingness on spread word-of-mouth. Besides, the study finds that once consumer places their trust to brand/a product, they willing to recommend positive word-of-mouth to others.

The research results support the proposed relationships among consumer experience, trust, word-of-mouth and CE (H2-H4) and between trust and word-of-mouth (H5). Among the results of the path coefficient analyses, with a coefficient value of 0.59, consumer experience is the most important significant factor predicting CE, which manifests that consumers who have positive experience with a tourism service provider are likely to engage more. This result is consistent with the results of Gambetti et al. (2012) and Prentice, Wang, and Loureiro (2019). This proves that consumer experience is the important factor deciding the level of consumption cohesion.

Puriwat and Tripopsakul (2014) posit that the quality factor within the service industry should be studied more. Likewise, the authors expected future researchers to further explore this particular setting. In the current study, although service providers do constantly enhance the consumer experience, service quality has a minimal effect on CE with a path coefficient of 0.147. This finding comes in line with Prentice et al. (2019) one, which demonstrated service quality has the least positive influence on CE. In other words, the quality of service as a stimulus factor seeks differences between different experiences. Therefore, the travel service consumers always feel excited, attracted to absorbing so much that they forget their surroundings when interacting in the service. This means that consumers are engaged not only in terms of behavior but also emotionally. These are dimensions of CE.

Other results shows that CE is an important predictor of positive and long-term relationships (trust and word-of-mouth). These results comes in accordance with previous research (Quynh, Hoai, Nha, & Gi-Du, 2018; So et al., 2016) in press; Dwivedi (2015) and Leckie, Nyadzayo, and Johnson (2016). Particular, in supporting proposed hypotheses H3 and H4, results reveal that CE has a strong influence on trust (with path coefficient 0.44) in comparison to word-of-mouth (with path coefficient 0.394). Therefore, it is expected that once consumers engage with a specific destination, they are highly likely to share their interesting experiences to others. Moreover, they could contribute to PR (Public Relations) a specific destination to others by posting significant comments on that destination's website.

5.2. Implications for Theory

The first contribution of the study is providing a nomological of the CE that can assess the role of its antecedence and consequences in the Vietnamese tourism context. With context-dependent nature (Brodie et al., 2011) the study tested the proposed model via empirical analyses in a specific context. Hence, the research findings reveal some important implications for marketing theory groundwork and CE literature such as how CE is

conceptualized and established from a particular context (based on Brodie et al. (2011)) and what potential antecedences and outcomes are likely to be predicted.

In addition to exploring the causal relationship between CE and related marketing structures, the multi-group effect of gender was also examined. The research results confirm the prior work of Sanchez-Franco et al. (2009) in regard to the difference in gender on the behavioral relationship of consumers. Particularly, the difference of gender leads to distinct effects in the relationships between CE and word-of-mouth and between CE and consumer experience.

In short, these signify that a construct combining psychological state and behavior intention like CE is more likely inextricably interactive to behavior constructs such as word-of-mouth and psychological constructs namely consumer experience, trust, and service quality. Moreover, the integration of multi-group impacts (e.g., gender) to increase the power explaining the consumer behavior of different groups.

5.3. Implication for Practice

The fierce competition among businesses in retaining current customers and attracting new customers is the complexity of consumer shopping behavior (Wong & Tsai, 2010). Therefore, through managing relationships between companies and consumers, service businesses are increasingly focusing on the value of experience (Baka, 2016) strengthening consumer engagement, viewing it as An important strategy for the organization (EConsultancy, 2008). Not outside of these points of view, the results also provide some practical implications for tourism service managers:

First, consumer experience and service quality are two important factors that predict the level of CE with a specific service. It is expected that tourism service providers should generate unique services stemmed from available resources, which will increase the different experiences for tourists leading to enhance CE. Besides, updating information, new pictures and videos on the business website, and tour guides' deep and extensive knowledge about the destinations are also factors improving the service quality that may stimulate consumer curiosity.

Secondly, this study introduced a new structure in the context of tourism in Vietnam, when CE became a real economic driving force, with physical strength to promote profit growth for businesses. That means the CE is the foundation of the consumers' sustainable, trustworthy and loyal relationships between a brand and consumer. The sustainable belief goes beyond the available principles and ethical behaviors that it achieves up to the threshold of understanding the partner's aspirations. These will help businesses consolidate reputation and image in consumer minds. Engaged tourists not only continue to revisit but also recommend to others. So now they are consumers and the most effective marketing staff for businesses as well, without salary. In a nutshell, CE amplifies the strength of the relationships between business and consumers (revisit intention, loyalty, word-of-mouth).

Finally, the differences in gender were proven to have different effects on the consumer's perceptions and behaviors. In other words, male consumers have more positive cognitive responses to future behavioral intention than female consumers. That means performance suitability should be noted in the consumer group selection strategy.

5.4. Limitations and Future Research

Unexpectedly, this study also has some limitations.

The conceptual framework of this research is based on Brodie et al. (2011) with CE is a multidimensional concept and depending on different contexts. However, the research results, firstly, have not evaluated the influence of the antecedence factors on each dimension of CE. Second, society increasingly promotes community consciousness and social responsibility in the service consumption process. Therefore, it is expected that future studies could solve two limitations by integrating these two factors into a new model and evaluating the potential of

those antecedents on each dimension of CE. Finally, Brodie et al. (2011) also suggested that the nature of CE is context-dependent, however, this study only assessed the casual relationships of CE with the multi-group influence of gender in the context of tourism services on Phu Quoc Island. Therefore, future studies are encouraged to evaluate this model (or integrate more social factors) with another context and demographic factor to further clarify the CE concept.

Funding: This study received no specific financial support.

Competing Interests: The author declares that there are no conflicts of interests regarding the publication of this paper.

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