Faculty of Business Economics

Master of Management

Master's thesis

Research on the impact of relationship marketing tactics on customer loyalty in the Taiwanese retail apparel industry

Ning Ya Yang
Thesis presented in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Management, specialization International Marketing Strategy

SUPERVISOR :

Prof. dr. Sara LEROI-WERELDS

2018
2019

Faculty of Business Economics
Master of Management

Master's thesis

Research on the impact of relationship marketing tactics on customer loyalty in the Taiwanese retail apparel industry

Ning Ya Yang

Thesis presented in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Management, specialization International Marketing Strategy

SUPERVISOR :

Prof. dr. Sara LEROI-WERELDS

Acknowledgments

This thesis is the last step for the completion of my study in the Master of Management: International Marketing Strategy program at Hasselt University. Writing this thesis not only broadens my knowledge in the field of relationship marketing but also improves my ability of academic research. I would like to express my great appreciation to those who have supported me throughout this journey.

First, I would like to thank my supervisor Prof. Dr. Sara Leroi-Werelds for her valuable and constructive feedback during the development of this thesis. Her willingness to invest in time and offer close guidance has been very much appreciated.

Second, I wish to acknowledge the help from all the respondents in Taiwan. Without their participation, I would not have been able to complete the research so smoothly.

Third, I am grateful for all the encouragement and the support from my family and friends throughout my study.

Ning Ya YANG
May 2019

II

Executive Summary

Relationship marketing has been widely studied in the past few decades due to the advantages of superior relationship economics. Not only does it help companies maintain customer relationships which lead to higher profitability (Grönroos, 1994), but it also creates relational value for the customers themselves (Berry, 1995). Among existing research, the framework of De Wulf et al. (2001) provided insights into the implementation of relationship marketing. Yet, the empirical evidence was based on data recorded in only two European countries and the USA. Considering Asia becoming an appealing target for developing international business (Piketty, 2014), it would be interesting to examine the effectiveness of the same model in an Asian market.

Hence, this study set out with the aim of assessing the impact of relationship marketing tactics in the context of the retail apparel industry in Taiwan. Additionally, three relationship marketing tactics from the research of Kang & Kim (2017) were added to the model to reflect the emergence of social media technology in the business world. The advanced technology allows retailers to connect and interact with their customers, which also contributes to relationship developments.

As for the research methodology, the hypotheses were tested by conducting quantitative research. For data collection, a self-administered online questionnaire on Qualtrics was constructed, which respondents in Taiwan can access via a link provided. SPSS was used to evaluate the data with statistical regression analysis for the empirical results. Among all the tactics presented, the significant determinants of customers' perception of relationship investments are proven to be interpersonal communication, tangible rewards, perceived marketer-dominated information quality, and perceived interaction quality in social media. The results also provided full support on the theories that higher perceived relationship investment leads to higher relationship quality and ultimately, stronger behavioral loyalty. In summary, the conceptual model from De Wulf et al. (2001) was supported and confirmed applicable for the retail apparel industry in the Taiwanese market. In addition, it is suggested that retailers could invest in relationship marketing tactics in social media platforms to keep customers informed and engage them in long-term relationships through social interactions.

The structure of this thesis is organized as follows: Chapter 1 introduces the problem statement. Chapter 2 poses the research questions, and chapter 3 encompasses the literature review regarding theories, conceptual models, and hypotheses. Chapter 4 explains the research methodology with data collection and statistical results. Finally, chapter 5 and 6 gives the conclusion, implications, and limitations of this master thesis.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

1 Introduction

Nowadays, customers are exposed to a wide variety of products and brands when making purchases. Because of this information and brand overload, it is becoming even harder for companies to reach customers and transform marketing efforts into profit. In such a competitive environment, companies are encouraged to adopt a relationship marketing strategy to build profitable relationships with their customers (Gordon et al., 1998). This strategy leads to a change in mindset. Firms become more long-term oriented and rely on more than just one-time transactions to maximize their profits (Ganesan, 1994).

Over time, many studies have demonstrated the shift from the traditional thought of marketing to relationship marketing (Grönroos, 1994; Gummesson, 1994). The customer-oriented focus of relationship marketing has challenged the primacy of the product-based 4P marketing (product, price, place, and promotion) and has become a dominant practice (Harker & Egan, 2006). In the words of Möller and Halinen (2000): "examining business exchange relationships from a relational and often enduring perspective, is very important for understanding contemporary marketing" (p. 30).

Moreover, this bond between the customer and the firm creates additional value for both parties beyond the value of products and services (Grönroos, 2004). By maintaining customers and building long term relationships, firms can reduce costs compared to acquiring new customers through mass marketing (Berry, 1995). Reichheld and Sasser (1990) also stated that customer retention contributes to improved profitability for the firms. The customers, on the other hand, receive relational benefits such as social and confidence benefits (Gwinner et al., 1998; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2002; Reynolds & Beatty, 1999). For example, these additional benefits provide customers with minimized purchasing risks, feelings of trustworthiness and security, a sense of belonging, and even reduced costs of being a customer. To conclude, it is important for business managers to understand and manage relationship marketing in order to achieve a mutually beneficial relationship.

Although academics have recognized the importance of relationship marketing, there are only a few studies that shed light on the practicality of relationship marketing implementations. In the studies of Grönroos (2004) and Odekerken-Schröder et al. (2003), communication, interaction, and personalization were identified as key components in performing relationship marketing strategies. De Wulf et al. (2001) composed the first article that operationalized and defined the tactics for fine-tuning relationship marketing implementation. The authors investigated four relationship marketing tactics (direct mail, preferential treatment, interpersonal communication, and tangible rewards), and their effectiveness in improving customer loyalty. Based on this article, one of the focus points for this thesis was to find new tactics that are popular in the business today and examine the impact of the tactics collectively.

Although the research of De Wulf et al. (2001) provided empirical evidence for the effect of various relationship marketing tactics, it is noteworthy that companies increasingly use social media to communicate and interact with their customers. Today, with widespread information communication technology, web applications such as online communities and social networking sites enable firms to measure, analyze, and ultimately improve customer loyalty (Havenstein, 2008). Social media has especially become the new forum for the sellers to not only communicate but also encourage interaction with their customers (Saravanakumar & SuganthaLakshmi, 2012). These characteristics have made integrating social media within customer relationship management one of the important relationship marketing tactics (Kang & Kim, 2017). To represent this new trend of relationship marketing practice, CRM tactics through social media will be applied to measure the impact of a firm's relationship investments on customer loyalty.

Another limitation of the work of De Wulf et al. (2001) lies in the lack of generalizability. The authors conducted their research in American and European markets. Consequently, the findings might be restricted to those markets which lead to a skewed view about the influence of RM tactics on customers loyalty. Hence, the second objective of this thesis is to apply the research model of De Wulf et al. (2001) to test the effectiveness of relationship marketing tactics in a different market.

While Europe encompasses many saturated markets, studies from Lee & Hong (2012) and Piketty (2014) showed that the fast growth of the population in Asian countries had made them appealing targets for developing international business. PwC (PricewaterhouseCoopers) published a study from Hawksworth and Chan (2015) that indicated that the global economic power will continue shifting from the developed economies in Western Europe towards Asia for the following 30 years. Moreover, the expansion of the middle class in Asia makes these emerging markets attractive targets for Western firms (Cavusgil et al., 2018). It is crucial for Western firms to create value and build relationships with customers to achieve superior performance in export markets (Kaleka & Morgan, 2017). More than ever, relationship marketing is important as it helps reduce customers' perception of uncertainty toward foreign sellers and create a strong brand appearance in the host markets (Abramson & Ai, 1998).

In light of the above, the purpose of this thesis is twofold. Firstly, CRM tactics through social media will be added to the framework of De Wulf et al. (2001) as additional RM tactics. Secondly, the study intends to analyze the effectiveness of relationship marketing tactics for the apparel retail industry in Asia, specifically in Taiwan. It is interesting to see if the tactics identified in the conceptual model still apply to a different setting - Taiwan, which has fundamental culture differences comparing with Europe and the United States. With the hope that this thesis might yield some insights about the reaction of Taiwanese customers, the managerial implications would suggest how firms could act when developing business in the Asian market.

2 Research Questions

The central research question is: <u>What is the impact of relationship marketing tactics on customer loyalty in Taiwan?</u>

To better analyze the central research question, sub-questions are listed as follow:

- What are the important RM tactics used nowadays?
- Do RM tactics influence how customers feel about the retailer?
- Do RM tactics improve customer loyalty?
- If so, how do these tactics influence customer loyalty?

3 Theoretical Background and Hypotheses

3.1 Relationship Marketing

The concept of relationship marketing was first introduced by Berry in 1983. Ever since, relationship marketing has been widely studied, which resulted in a variety of definitions. Despite the various definitions that have been used in prior research, there are a few important characteristics that can be deduced from the existing literature.

First of all, one crucial element in relationship marketing is customer retention. Firms should focus not only on attracting new customers but also on maintaining and enhancing customer relationships (Berry, 1983). In line with this thought, Grönroos (1994) contributed with a general definition, which has been acknowledged and adapted in later studies. He approached marketing with a relational perspective: "Marketing is to establish, maintain, and enhance relationships with customers and other partners, at a profit, so that the objectives of the parties involved are met (p.9)." In view of this, businesses change their strategic focus from customer acquisition to customer retention for achieving a mutually beneficial long-term relationship.

Second, the presence of relationship marketing can be seen as a paradigm shift from traditional product-based 4P (product, price, place, and promotion) marketing to resource-based and customer-oriented relational marketing (Dwyer et al., 1987; Grönroos, 1996; Gummesson, 1994; Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Regarding the resource-based perspective, companies utilize their resources (e.g., personnel, technology, knowledge and time) to provide a total service and augment their core services with extra benefits, instead of simply featuring product attributes (Berry, 1995; Grönroos, 1996; Gummesson, 1994). As for customer orientation, it is imperative for firms to identify potential customers, establish relationships with them, and to maintain and enhance these relationships (Grönroos, 2004). While the traditional thought of marketing focuses heavily on the sales and promotion for more one-time transactions, "relationship marketing is marketing seen as relationships, networks, and interaction" stated Gummesson (1994, p.5). This paradigm shift fundamentally changes the interaction between the firms and their customers. Overall, the relationship between the seller and the buyer becomes an ongoing process in which both parties continuously interact and even further cooperate and collaborate with each other (Sheth & Parvatiyar, 1995).

Last but not least, in addition to customer retention and the paradigm shift, relationship marketing also entails the pursuit of superior relationship economics. According to Grönroos's (1994) definition, a relationship is an ongoing value-creating process. Relationship marketing creates value for both suppliers and buyers. With respect to customers, Berry (1995) stated that many customers have the tendency to participate in a relationship with the same provider to enjoy the potential benefit from a continuous relationship. Echoed with this idea, Hennig-Thurau et al. (2002) recognized that customers enjoy the confidence and social benefits from a long-term relationship with a service

provider. These two relational benefits help reduce customer anxiety by decreasing risk and uncertainty and create a sense of familiarity when a friendship is built between the firm employees and customers.

The firms, on the other hand, benefit from the loyalty level of customers. Reichheld and Sasser (1990) pointed out that preventing the customers from defecting has a stronger positive influence on firms' long-term financial performance comparing with that of acquiring new customers. It is important for the firms to fulfill the promises at a profit. With the help of information technology, firms can more efficiently engage in dyadic relationships with individual customers than spending huge marketing cost for unproductive mass marketing communication. In this long-term relationship, both parties further learn from interacting with each other and thus reduce relationship cost for both. As well depicted by Grönroos (1994): "a mutually satisfactory relationship makes it possible for customers to avoid significant transaction costs involved in shifting supplier or service provider and for suppliers to avoid suffering unnecessary quality costs" (p. 9).

3.2 Framework from De Wulf et al. (2001)

Given the importance of relationship marketing, this thesis aims to examine the implementation of relationship marketing based on the framework of De Wulf et al. (2001). The authors composed the conceptual model based on the fundamental assumption of reciprocity. Broadly defined, reciprocity can be seen as the moral obligation which leads to the behavioral response of people to a perceived kindness or unkindness in social life (Becker, 1986; Falk & Fischbacher, 2006; Molm, 2010). One may feel obligated to return the favor in proportion to what he or she has received in the past (Becker, 1986). According to the reciprocal action theory mentioned by Li and Dant (1997), actions taken by one party will be reciprocated in kind by the others in an exchange relationship. In cases of violation of the reciprocal norm, each party involved would anticipate the responsible party to feel the sense of guilt (De Wulf et al., 2001). Consequently, both parties will be willing to adopt a long-term relationship with a reciprocal perspective, and less likely to act selfish and opportunistic (Dwyer et al., 1987).

Put in a consumer-firm context, reciprocity explains the self-interest of customers to engage in the economic exchange in an ongoing relation (Bagozzi, 1995). As stated by Solomon et al. (1985, p101), the communication and interaction between the firm and their customers "is a reciprocal process rather than a linear one" (p.101). Firms' investments in the relationship, interpreted as commitment, would induce reciprocal commitments from their customers (Li & Dant, 1997). In other words, when consumers perceive extra benefits from a relationship, they are willing to make compensating movement and return the good to the seller (Becker, 1986; Houston & Gassenheimer, 1987). For example, customers give up the opportunities to purchase from other alternatives and stay loyal to one specific supplier (Li & Dant, 1997). Furthermore, the reciprocal interactions enable firms to not only understand consumer behavior but also foster a positive atmosphere and remove barriers of risk (De Wulf et al., 2001).

In line with the aforementioned, the principle of reciprocity is considered a useful framework for investigating retailer-consumer interactions (De Wulf et al., 2001). When firms invest time, effort or other irretrievable resources in a relationship, they expect the consumers to return the favor with their loyalty and become deeper involved in the relationship. Therefore, with the model shown in the figure below, De Wulf et al. (2001) conceptualized the paths between the firm investments in relationship marketing tactics and the customer reciprocation which is demonstrated with behavioral loyalty. It is postulated that the RM tactics influence the customers' perception of relationship investment, which is believed to improve the relationship quality and eventually leads to higher behavioral loyalty.

Each of the variables will be explained further in the following sections of the literature review.
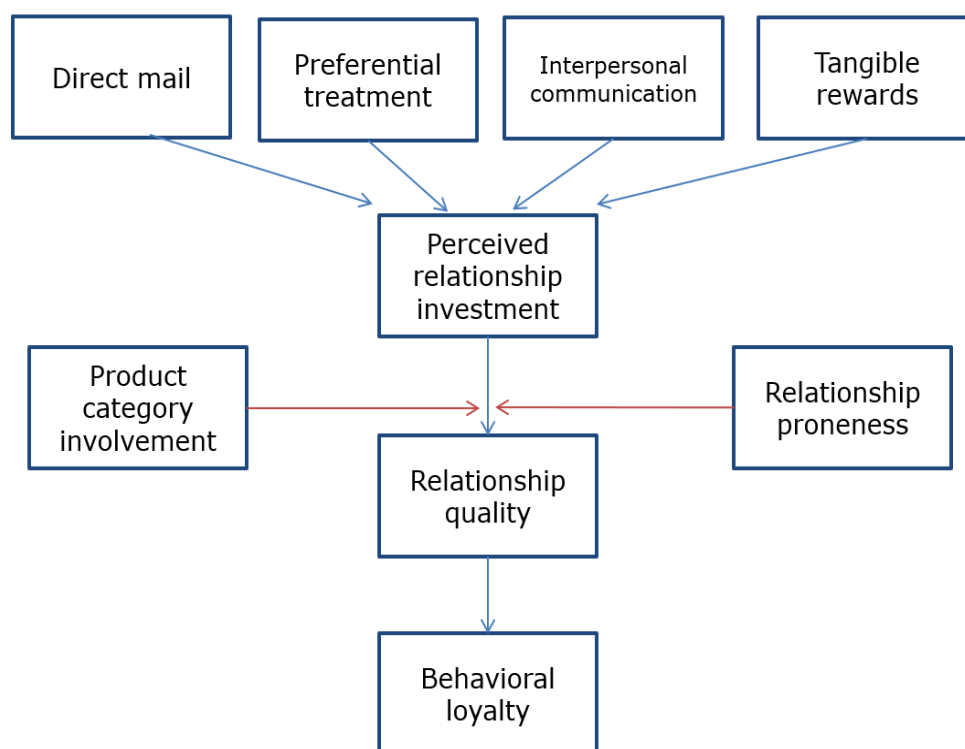
Figure 1. Conceptual model from De Wulf et al. (2001, p.34)

3.2.1 Relationship Marketing tactics

For the relationship marketing tactics, De Wulf et al. (2001) suggested four tactics based on the research of Berry (1995). In this research, it was concluded that relationship marketing can be implemented on three different levels to enhance customer loyalty. Level one relationship marketing mainly involves pricing incentives. This level of bonding yields weak competitive advantages since it is easily imitable. However, it is the most common practice among businesses. Level two relationship marketing indicates the social bonding which primarily relies on personalization and customization.

For instance, firms exercise this level of relationship marketing when getting familiarized with customers through continuous communication, calling customers by names, or offering additional services. Level three relationship marketing offers structural solutions. This approach binds customers to the corporate's system instead of retaining the customers through relationship building skills, which is thus not the focus of this thesis. Drawing from the first two levels of relationship marketing, De Wulf et al. (2001) selected four types of tactics: taking tangible reward from level one and direct mail, preferential treatment, and interpersonal communication from level two.

Direct Mail: De Wulf et al. (2001) defined direct mail as "a consumer's perception of the extent to which a retailer keeps its regular customers informed through direct mail." Information sharing through marketing communication is necessary for supporting and enhancing the relationships with customers (Grönroos, 2004). It is recognized that meaningful communication leads to a positive experience and a feeling of trust (Anderson & Narus, 1990). Conclusively, communication can be regarded as a crucial condition for the existence of a relationship (Duncan & Moriarty, 1998). Among numerous approaches of communication, De Wulf et al. (2001) focused on analyzing the direct communication media. Unlike mass marketing communication, direct mailing allows firms to convey interest and target specific groups, such as regular customers. Thus, direct mail, as a way of communication, is assumed to potentially influence consumers' perceptions of relationship investment.

Preferential treatment: This tactic is defined as "a consumer's perception of the extent to which a retailer treats and serves its regular customers better than its non-regular customers" (De Wulf et al., 2001). Concluding from the existing literature, two critical elements of this tactic are customer selectivity and the provision of enhanced products or services that are beyond standard value proposition (De Wulf et al., 2001; Gwinner et al., 1998; Lacey et al., 2007; Odekerken-Schröder et al., 2003). According to Berry (1995), it is important to target profitable customers. Firms should identify customers who are likely to be loyal and develop strategies to provide superior value to these customers. Serving all customers with the same level of effort might simply be too costly and difficult to achieve. Preferential treatment can be classified into two categories: economic and customization (Gwinner et al., 1998). For example, firms often practice economic-based preferential treatments like priority services, upgrades, and complementary products, and customization-based preferential treatments like customized products, private events and so on. Customers who feel recognized and appreciated by the firm are more likely to increase their purchase activities, spread word of mouth, and provide feedback (Lacey et al., 2007). Preferential treatment allows firms to address the customers with special status and make them feel valued.

Interpersonal communication: Interpersonal communication refers to a customer's perception of the extent that a firm adds a warm and personal touch in buyer-seller interaction (De Wulf et al., 2001). According to Solomon et al. (1985), customer's personal encounter with the firms' employees is an important factor in customer satisfaction and repeat patronage. Practices like calling regular customers by names, engaging in friendly conversations and building friendships between store employees and customers are common examples of this relationship marketing tactic (Berry, 1995;

De Wulf et al., 2001; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2002). This interpersonal contact is considered critical in building intimate and long-term relationships with customers (Metcalf et al., 1992). In addition to personal recognition, customers might experience an emotional connection with sellers and a sense of belonging to specific stores. Thus, it is presumed that interpersonal communication has a positive impact on the perceived level of relationship investment.

Tangible reward: Tangible reward is defined as a customer's perception of the extent to which a seller offers tangible benefits to encourage and reward customer loyalty (De Wulf et al., 2001). A majority of firms offer this type of reward through pricing or gift incentives (Berry, 1995). Instead of viewing each transaction as an independent event, customers would be motivated to engage in a sequence of interactions with a retailer to achieve rewards (Lewis, 2004). Although pricing incentives are easy for competitors' imitation, rewards on cumulative purchases can improve retention rate and help customers remain loyal (De Wulf et al., 2001; Lewis, 2004). For example, an airline frequency program encourages customers to repeatedly fly through the same company to collect miles for future discounts, bonuses, and gifts. As a result, tangible rewards are considered as a valid RM tactic in influencing customers' perception of the firms' retention efforts.

3.2.2 Perceived Relationship Investment

In contrast to the opportunistic mindset, firms dedicate time, efforts and other irretrievable resources as relationship investments to prove their commitment and demonstrate how much they value the customers. Supposedly, when customers perceive and interpret such efforts as well-intentioned acts with added value, they would feel impressed and grow trust toward the supplier (Hart & Johnson, 1999). This idea is in line with the principle of reciprocity mentioned earlier. As defined by De Wulf et al. (2001), perceived relationship investment in this model represents customers' perception of the extent of the retailer's investment (e.g., attention, time, efforts or resources) directed towards relationship maintenance or enhancement which accrues extra benefits.

According to Gwinner et al. (1998), customers that are in a relationship with the seller expect additional benefits from it. For example, in the research of Reynolds and Beatty (1999), they suggested functional benefits (e.g., time-saving and useful advice from the retailer) and social benefits (e.g., friendship with sales employees). The level of these perceived benefits was found to be associated with customer satisfaction, loyalty, and word of mouth (Reynolds & Beatty, 1999). This finding again proves that the customers reciprocate based on their perception of the retention efforts made by the firm. The more the customers perceive potential benefits, the more willing they are to perform actions required for staying in a relationship (Babin et al., 1994).

Although relationship investments were found to be the key predictor of relationship quality (Smith, 1998), it is hard to measure objectively from the firm's perspective (Too et al., 2001). The effectiveness of firms' relationship marketing efforts has to be judged through the eyes of the customer. Too et al. (2001) also argued that the more the firms strive to implement relationship marketing, the more the customers will recognize the efforts. Hence, as shown in the first half of

the conceptual model, RM tactics are postulated as the antecedents of perceived relationship investment to measure their influence on the perception of the customers. Ultimately, customers' perception of the firm's endeavor to improve relationships will lead to improved relationship quality as the consequence.

3.2.3 Relationship Quality

According to the model of De Wulf et al. (2001), customers' perceived level of relationship investment has an impact on relationship quality, which then influences the behavioral loyalty of customers. Relationship quality can be seen as an overall evaluation of the strength of a relationship between the retailer and their customers (De Wulf et al., 2001; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2002; Smith, 1998). Among all the existing researches, relationship quality has been defined in various ways. The definition from Crosby et al. (1990) is widely adopted in later researches. These authors conceptualized relationship quality as a higher-order construct with two dimensions: customers' satisfaction and trust. The customers' perception of these two components stems from the salesperson's ability to reduce uncertainty and their previous experience of positive interactions. Drawing from the research of Morgan and Hunt (1994), commitment and trust are considered essential to the success of relationship marketing. The presence of commitment and trust from customers leads to cooperative behaviors in a relationship. Later on, commitment was adopted in a lot of research as an indispensable condition of high relationship quality (Hennig-Thurau & Klee, 1997; Too et al., 2001). Though there are undoubtedly other potential factors contributing to the quality of relationship (e.g., interaction efficiency, transaction cost reduction and social need fulfillment) (Hennig-Thurau & Klee, 1997), the general conceptualizations in this thesis focus on: trust between two parties, satisfaction and commitment to the long-term relationship (De Wulf et al., 2001; Smith, 1998). These three components of relationship quality will be briefly explained in the following.

Trust:
In the research of Hart & Johnson (1999) regarding total trust, they mentioned the trust from customers is a crucial indicator of the positive relationship and customer loyalty for the firms. Moorman et al. (1992, p315) described trust as "... a willingness to rely on an exchange partner in whom one has confidence" (p. 315). Drawing from existing literature, the importance of confidence and reliability is often highlighted in the constructs of trust (Garbarino & Johnson, 1999; Morgan & Hunt, 1994).

In a retailer-consumer context, customers should be able to confidently rely on the salesperson to behave in the best interest of customers' (Crosby et al., 1990; Hart & Johnson, 1999; Smith, 1998) and to not take unexpected actions which result in negative outcomes (Anderson & Narus, 1990). In line with these explanations, Grönroos (1994) explained that it takes belief in the other party's expertise, reliability or intentionality to form the trust. He added that one who has trust in the other party performs the behavioral intention to rely on the other partner and bear the vulnerability for themselves. Although some scholars then argued both perceived trustworthiness and trusting

behaviors represent an aspect of trust, De Wulf et al., (2001) believed that the customers' perception towards the trustworthiness of the firm is a sufficient condition for the trust. Thus, only the notion of trustworthiness will be measured as a component of relationship quality.

Relationship satisfaction:

Broadly defined, satisfaction can be seen as a positive emotional state resulted from all aspects of a relationship with a firm (Anderson & Narus, 1990; Reynolds & Beatty, 1999). In a narrow definition, Smith (1998) and Crosby et al. (1990) added that this state is triggered by the customers' evaluations of interaction experiences with the retailer compared to that of other alternatives. Although satisfaction can be discussed on both transactional and overall level (Hennig-Thurau & Klee, 1997), De Wulf et al. (2001) followed the latter of the two and described satisfaction as an affective state derived from customers' holistic assessment of his or her relationship with a retailer. In other words, the development of satisfaction is a cumulative process instead of a judgment based on only products or one-time transaction (Garbarino & Johnson, 1999; Hart & Johnson, 1999).

Commitment:

Drawing from the literature on commitment in different contexts (social exchange, marriage, and organizations), Morgan and Hunt (1994) defined relationship commitment as an exchange partner believing that maintaining an ongoing relationship is worth the best efforts. Furthermore, Gundlach et al. (1995) described that the existing of commitment can be explained with the attitudinal component (e.g., psychological attachment) and the instrumental component (e.g., investment) in the building of a long-term relationship. Therefore, it is concluded that commitment requires both parties to not just desire but dedicate themselves in consistently supporting a valued relationship (Dwyer et al., 1987; Moorman et al., 1992; Smith, 1998). Echoed with this thought, De Wulf et al. (2001) proposed that the measures of commitment include "the presence and consistency over time of both the desire to continue a relationship and the willingness to make efforts directed at sustaining this relationship" (p. 37).

Overall, receiving the benefits rewarded by the exchange partner does increase the interdependence in the relationship (Dwyer et al., 1987). The higher perceived fulfillment of exchange obligations, the bigger the motivation of the other party to maintain the relationship (Dwyer et al., 1987). However, few studies have directly investigated the causal relationship between relationship investment and relationship quality. As one of the rare examples, Crosby et al. (1990) did recognize the establishment of interpersonal relationships from selling behavior as one key antecedent of relationship quality.

Instead, more researches have focused on the influence of relationship investment on each dimension of relationship quality (trust, satisfaction, and commitment) (De Wulf et al., 2001). For example, relationship investments have been identified as a precursor to the existence of trust in a business relationship. As Ganeson (1994) addressed, the vendor's specific investment provides a signal of trustworthiness, which leads to increased trust from the other partner. Morgan and Hunt (1994) added that both customers' trust and satisfaction are strengthened by the shared value in

11

the relationship. In line with this, Gwinner et al. (1998) suggested that customer satisfaction is stimulated by perceived relationship benefits. With respect to commitment, Gundlach et al. (1995) mentioned in their study of commitment construct that one's perception of the dedicated relationship investment from the other's influences his/her long-term commitment intention. In brief, customers' commitment to a relationship mirrors their own perceptions of the efforts dedicated in maintaining a relationship from the firm (Too et al., 2001). Combining all the findings, it is postulated that the perceived level of relationship investment contributes positively to the relationship quality in general.

3.2.4   Behavioral Loyalty

Loyalty is considered a primary goal for the firms that practice relationship marketing (Sheth & Parvatiyar, 1995). Customer loyalty comprises both behavioral and attitudinal components (Bolton, 1998; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2002). According to De Wulf et al. (2001), behavioral changes of customers reflect the effectiveness of relationship marketing tactics. For example, customers often demonstrate their loyalty through the continuity of patronage, repeat purchases, cross-buying, and word of mouth (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2002; Reynolds & Beatty, 1999; Sheth & Parvatiyar, 1995). Moreover, in the words of Hennig-Thurau et al. (2002), "All relationship marketing activities are ultimately evaluated on the basis of the company's overall profitability" (p. 231). Since the firm's profitability can be influenced by even irrelevant variables to the relationship itself, it makes sense to conceptualize relationship marketing outcomes on a more concrete level. Thus, the construct of behavioral loyalty, measured with purchasing frequency and share of wallet of a consumer toward a certain retailer, will be investigated to imply customer loyalty (De Wulf et al., 2001).

Many studies have demonstrated the path between dimensions of relationship quality and behavioral loyalty. In the model of Morgan and Hunt (1994), higher commitment and trust are accompanied by improved customer retention and cooperation between the firm and its customers. When consumers are committed to a relationship, they tend to repeatedly purchase from the same company (Sheth & Parvatiyar, 1995). Crosby et al. (1990) also proposed that depending on the level of trust and satisfaction perceptions, customers are likely to make decisions on staying or leaving the relationship with the seller. Take satisfaction, for example, Hennig-Thurau and Klee (1997) discussed the link between satisfaction and customer retention, and suggested utilizing repurchase intention to measure the behavioral outcomes. Hart and Johnson (1999) also pointed out that customer satisfaction is a prior indicator of companies' performance and profitability. Based on these findings about the behavioral outcomes of a relationship, one can say that the higher level of relationship quality brings out a stronger level of behavioral loyalty from customers.

3.2.5   Factors Moderating the Effect of Perceived Relationship Investment

In addition to the causal relationship of RM tactics on customer loyalty, De Wulf et al. (2001) distinguished two moderators, product category involvement and consumer relationship proneness, to assess the interacting influence of these consumer characteristics on the correlation between

perceived relationship investment and relationship quality. A key aspect from the study of Berry (1995) is that relationship marketing is not always the most appropriate strategy for all consumers. Some may be more loyalty-prone and easily affected by the firms' efforts in retaining customers. Measuring these two consumer characteristics can yield insights into the expected effectiveness level of the relationship marketing investments from customers' perspective (De Wulf et al., 2001; Gordon et al., 1998).

Product category involvement:

Product category involvement generally refers to a consumer's perceived importance of the focal object based on his/her value and needs (De Wulf et al., 2001; Mittal, 1995; Zaichkowsky, 1994). It is a subjective state of motivation and interest toward the consumption of a product category (Dick & Basu, 1994; Olsen, 2007). At high levels of involvement, consumers tend to remain more persistent in their preferences and hold greater long-term satisfaction for a particular brand (Gordon et al., 1998). Furthermore, several studies have suggested the positive influence of consumers' product category involvement on behavioral loyalty (Bloemer & Kasper, 1995; Mittal, 1995; Olsen, 2007).

Involved consumers have a higher tendency to participate in the relationship with the seller (Christy et al., 1996; Gordon et al., 1998). The authors further added that only when customers are interested in the product category, such relationships can deliver added value to them. On the contrary, relationship marketing tactics may annoy consumers with a low level of involvement to the product category. Unlike the involved buyers, the uninvolved ones are not motivated to pay attention or even devote efforts required to stay in a relationship with a particular retailer. Under this circumstance, the relationship marketing investment made by the firm might be ineffective and even perceived as invasive by the customers (Gordon et al., 1998).

As Solomon et al. (1985) stated, treating customers as individuals is desirable for those with a high level of involvement while such personal treatment might not pay off during the encounters with uninvolved customers. Since customers' level of involvement changes across different product categories, some markets may not be as responsive to the firm's relationship marketing investments (Dick & Basu, 1994). Thus, customers' perception of the efforts made by the firm is expected to have a strengthened effect on relationship quality due to a high level of product category involvement of the consumers (De Wulf et al., 2001).

Consumer relationship proneness:

Shoppers can engage in relational market behavior for various reasons. For example, Sheth and Parvatiyar (1995) concluded several drivers like greater efficiency, reduction of risks and information processing, influence from peers and more. However, some customers may simply be psychologically inclined to engage in a relationship (Christy et al., 1996). De Wulf et al. (2001) defined this consumer relationship proneness as the consumers' "relatively stable and conscious tendency to engage in relationships with retailers of a particular product category" (p. 38).
It is an attitude of the customers "in terms of the intention to establish a relationship with a service provider" (Lin, 2013, p209). Unlike the consumers buying from the same provider due to the ease

of access or the passive attitude towards changes, relationship-prone consumers consciously and consistently make decisions in favor of one particular brand or seller (Dick & Basu, 1994). As for the prerequisite of one particular product category, Christy et al. (1996) stated that the attitude of consumers toward relationship building is to some extent preconditioned depending on the group of sellers. Therefore, De Wulf et al. (2001) deduced that this variable has to be measured within a particular product category.

Relational preferences, the degrees to which a relationship is desired by customers, have the potential to change the influence that relational benefits have on customer loyalty (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2002; Reynolds & Beatty, 1999). Kim et al. (2012) added that relationship-prone consumers may reciprocate a retailer's relational efforts more strongly. They also mentioned that these consumers might find it easier to understand and acquire the benefits from a relationship due to their accumulated experience from all types of relationship developments. In conclusion, it is assumed that a higher level of consumer relationship proneness causes an amplifying effect between perceived relationship investment and relationship quality.

3.3   CRM tactics through social media

In addition to the four RM tactics provided from the original conceptual model of De Wulf et al. (2001), this thesis will include CRM tactics through social media to capture the impact from the retailers' relationship investments in social networking sites. As mentioned in the introduction, the widespread information communication technology calls attention to the increasing use of social media in firms' relationship developments. The emerging popularity of social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter or Instagram has opened a new chapter of business and research opportunities (Liang et al., 2011). Businesses are eager to follow this trend to stay connected with their customers (Heller Baird & Parasnis, 2011). Recent evidence suggested that social media use is also positively related to consumer-brand relationship quality (Hudson et al., 2016). Moreover, mastering relationship building skills in social media contributes to a win-win situation in which consumers derive satisfaction from greater attachment to the firm, while loyalty and profitability are generated for the firm through understanding customers better (Hudson et al., 2016). In brief, the importance of social media in relationship marketing is widely acknowledged, and thus will be included in this thesis as the crucial element for a part of the RM tactics.

Kang and Kim (2017) defined such practices of relationship marketing on social media as "social CRM" tactics. As stated in several studies (Gummesson et al., 2004), traditional CRM can be narrowly defined as a practical application that implements relationship marketing by identifying, differentiating individual customers and responding to customer needs efficiently. With the help of information technology, firms are capable of closing the gap between them and the customers with CRM practices (Berry, 1995). The merger of existing CRM with social media technology has further given way to a new concept of CRM which affects the connections and the degree of customer engagement in managing relationships (Malthouse et al., 2013; Trainor et al., 2014). Customers

can actively participate in collaborative conversations. Simultaneously, firms get the opportunities to hear the thoughts of their customers and respond to their needs during the process of relationship building (Malthouse et al., 2013). Although very little investigation has been done regarding the CRM tactics through social media, Trainor et al. (2014) addressed that these tactics hold numerous potentials in fostering stronger relationships with customers and, by doing so, facilitate increased revenue, cost reduction, and communication efficiency.

In the research of Kang and Kim (2017) regarding social CRM, they distinguished three consumer perception-based factors of the online CRM tactics through social media and examined their impact on perceived relationship investment. These three variables are "perceived marketer-dominated information", "perceived interaction quality", and "perceived service content quality." This thesis will adopt these measurements with the aim of understanding the impact of online relationship marketing tactics through social media on perceived relationship investment and ultimately, the path to customer loyalty.

First of all, marketer-dominated information quality "reflects comprehensive, accurate, and exclusive information related to product promotion and advertising offered by marketers in social media" (Kang & Kim, 2017). According to Mitra et al. (1999), information sources can be categorized into three types: marketer-dominated sources (e.g., promotion and advertising), neutral sources (e.g., newspapers and consumer reports), and consumer dominated sources (e.g., word-of-mouth). The authors mentioned that the ease of access to marketer-dominated information enables customers to evaluate the product or services before use. In the article about an IBM survey regarding social CRM (Heller Baird & Parasnis, 2011), the authors found out that the majority of customers engaged in social media relationships with the retailers care about receiving product promotions and discount information which yield tangible values. Furthermore, they concluded that customers would also evaluate the information quality on social media based on how honest they feel the retailers are and how well the consumers' rights are protected (e.g., privacy and spam issues).

Although the impact of perceived marketer-dominated information quality in social media is hardly investigated, some evidence does exist. Information acquisition and processing have been considered as an important factor in reducing perceived risks in the context of consumer decision making (Mitra et al., 1999). According to the highly cited model from DeLone and McLean (1992), web information quality is regarded as one of the key elements to user satisfaction. In the context of mobile social networking services (SNS), the information quality has a significant impact on users' trust, which further leads to loyalty from mobile SNS users. Based on these prior findings, it is presumed that the higher perceived marketer-dominated information quality in social media, the more customers may feel the sense of trust, satisfaction and perform loyalty to the retailer (Kang & Kim, 2017). As a result, the customers would also perceive the retailer to be retention oriented and dedicated to relationship development.

Second, perceived interaction quality indicates "the connectedness or the being in contact of two or more individuals regardless of the activities that bring them into contact" (Hoegl and Gemuenden,

2001, p436). In the brand's social media, consumers can share information, form close relationships, and interact with others and the brand itself (Kang & Kim, 2017). Brandtzæg and Heim (2009) described social interaction as one of the main reasons people use social networking sites. Instead of one-way information sharing, firms get to interact in two-way communications with their customers on social media (Hudson et al., 2016; Kang & Kim, 2017). Meanwhile, customers also evaluate the relationship retention efforts of the firm based on the extent of the connectedness, freedom of opinion exchange, responses from the firm and interactions with each other (Kang & Kim, 2017).

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) advised companies to actively engage in interactions on social networking sites for their survival in modern markets. While customer interaction in social media has been widely discussed, little marketing research has been conducted to analyze the effects of perceived interaction quality on consumer attitudes and behaviors. When the retailer or the brand interacts with the followers, their consumers may potentially feel connected, increase their sense of trust and thus experience a higher level of relationship quality (Hudson et al., 2016). The authors further supported the idea that the interaction with a retailer via social media can foster an emotional attachment and a feeling of intimacy like an interpersonal social interaction. In the study of Seol et al. (2016) regarding SNS, high social interaction quality contributes to user satisfaction and keeps the relationship going between the retailer and their customers on social media. In line with the aforementioned, it is proposed therefore that consumers who perceive a higher quality of interaction in the social media may perceive the retailer to be more dedicated in relationship building and more retention oriented (Kang & Kim, 2017).

Lastly, service content quality measures the perception of customers towards the "details and content about customer services with effective problem solving" in social media (Kang & Kim, 2017). Since social media is a relatively new field for marketing researches, conclusive findings are limited regarding the impact of service content in social media on customers' perception of the firms' retention efforts. However, some assumptions can be deduced from the evidence found in the context of e-commerce. Similar to the definition from Kang & Kim (2017), Hwang and Kim (2007) defined the perceived web quality with service content as "the user's perception on the customer service and privacy based on the website interface and functions" (p. 749). The findings in this same study showed that perceived web quality with service content is a significant antecedent of customers' trust. In the research of online service quality, ease of navigation to service content increases consumers' service enjoyment, which further affects their commitment and loyalty (Dai et al., 2011). DeLone & McLean (2003) updated their information system model with the suggestion that the overall support delivered through service content by the firm can potentially reduce lost sales and have a positive impact on user satisfaction. Based on these phenomena resulted from service content quality, it is postulated that the higher the perceived service content quality in social media, the more the customers perceive the relationship investments dedicated from the firm. (Kang & Kim, 2017)

3.4 Adapted conceptual model & Hypotheses

Based on the previous paragraphs of the literature review, the adapted conceptual model and the overall hypotheses can be derived as follow:
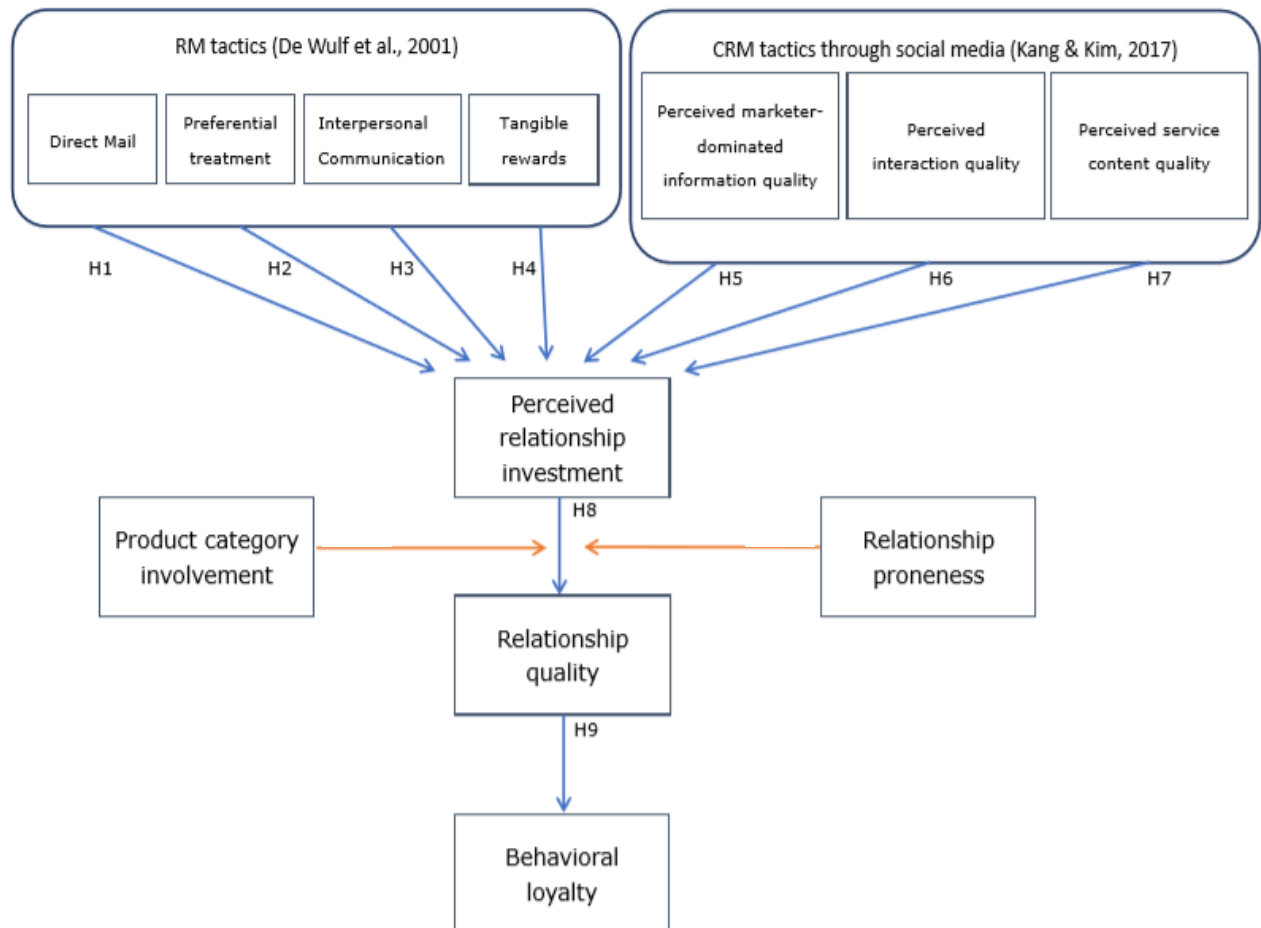
Figure 2. Adapted conceptual model

The model hypotheses are explained in the table below. The main focus of this thesis is to understand the impact of various relationship marketing tactics on customer loyalty. With this goal in mind, the interacting influence from "product involvement" and "relationship proneness" is beyond the scope of this study. Measuring the moderating effect of these two variables would require a doubled amount of data. Due to the time limit, the hypothesized relationship between these two moderators and the path from perceived relationship investment to relationship quality would not be statistically tested.

Table 1. Theoretical hypotheses

H1: A higher perceived level of direct mail leads to a higher perceived level of relationship investment.
H2: A higher perceived level of preferential treatment leads to a higher perceived level of relationship investment
H3: A higher perceived level of interpersonal communication leads to a higher perceived level of relationship investment.
H4: A higher perceived level of tangible rewards leads to a higher perceived level of relationship investment.
H5: A higher level of perceived marketer-dominated information quality in social media leads to a higher perceived level of relationship investment.
H6: A higher level of perceived interaction quality in social media leads to a higher perceived level of relationship investment.
H7: A higher level of perceived service content quality in social media leads to a higher perceived level of relationship investment.
H8: A higher perceived level of relationship investment leads to a higher level of relationship quality.
H9: A higher level of relationship quality leads to a higher level of behavioral loyalty.

4   Research Methodology

4.1   Setting

This study was conducted in the context of the apparel retail industry in Taiwan. The aim is to apply the adapted conceptual model based on the work of De Wulf et al. (2001) and Kang & Kim (2017) to examine the effect of relationship marketing tactics on customer loyalty.

The research of De Wulf et al. (2001) included respondents from the United States, the Netherlands, and Belgium. Taiwan, with utterly different culture and social norms, provides a different setting for this thesis. In a nutshell, Taiwan is a country in East Asia with approximately 23.5 million population on a 36km^2 land. It is an advanced economy with soaring GDP (IMF, 2016). With the rapid growth of the Taiwanese economy, people are in high demand for luxury products like apparel (Wen et al., 2012). According to the information from The statistic Portal (2015), the apparel market has experienced a steady growth over the past years, which provides an ideal condition for this study.

4.2   Data collection & Sample

The data for the quantitative survey was collected through a self-administered online questionnaire via Qualtrics. For the ease of operation, the questionnaire was distributed based on the convenience sampling technique. Participants can access the questionnaire through a link posted on social media or sent to them via e-mail. They can respond to the survey whenever and wherever they find fit. This approach enabled the collection of primary data in a short period of time without being restricted by the geographical distance between Europe and Taiwan.

Among 221 responses, 66 of them were incomplete entries. Hence, a total of 155 surveys were used for the analysis.   The sample included 78.1 percent (121) female respondents, 20 percent (31) male respondents, and 1.9 percent (3) others. In general, this gender distribution echoed with the ideas that women enjoy shopping more than men and have higher involvement with retail environments (Herter et al., 2014).
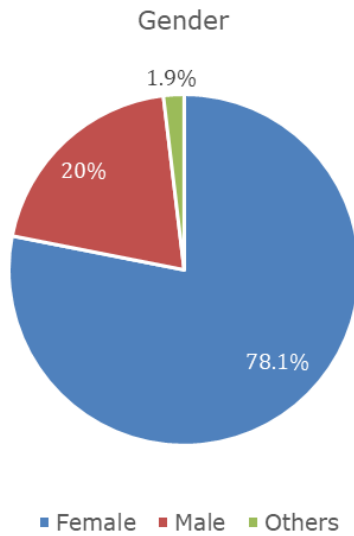
Figure 3. Gender distribution

With respect to age, adults aged 18 years old and above participated in this survey. As shown in the bar chart below, the age distribution spanned from 18 to 56 years old. Although the range is wide, the frequency number peaked at age 27 with a count of 45 people. More than 70 percent of the respondents are between 25 to 28 years old which indicated the major cluster of the age distribution.
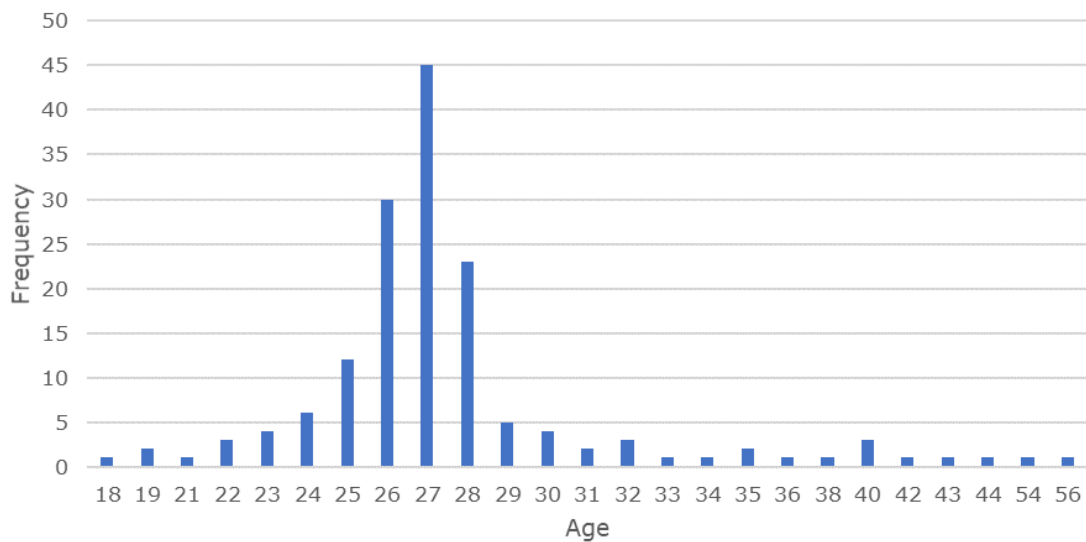

Figure 4. Age distribution

4.3   Research method & Questionnaire development

The statistical techniques applied in this study are both simple and multiple linear regression analysis. Multiple linear regression was used to examine the relative contribution of each tactic on the overall variance of perceived relationship investments (H1-H7); in other words, the individual impact of the relationship marketing tactics. As for the relationship between perceived relationship investment and relationship quality (H8), and between relationship quality and behavioral loyalty (H9), the hypothesized paths were examined using a series of simple regression analysis.

The questionnaire items (see Appendix) were mostly adapted from De Wulf et al. (2001), except for the CRM tactics through social media, which were based on the article of Kang & Kim (2017). The measures were rephrased to fit the apparel retail context. Most questions are fixed-response items which require participants to choose from predetermined answers. The Likert scale with seven response categories ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" allows respondents to indicate their level of agreement with the statements. The only exceptions are the scales used for behavioral loyalty variable. Respondents were asked to drag the bar between 0 - 100 to indicate their percentage of spending and choose from 0 - 10 to show the frequency of their patronage to this specific retail store. Furthermore, to exclude unqualified participants, filter questions were asked first regarding the experience of clothing purchases. The entries which selected no to the question of "Have you ever made purchases in apparel retail stores" were discarded since the survey required respondents to have personal shopping experience in retail stores.

As the study is conducted in the Taiwanese market, a native speaker translated the questionnaire to Chinese for the ease of answering for respondents. Both English and Chinese scripts were displayed together in the e-questionnaire to ensure a clear understanding. Prior to the publication of the questionnaire, a pilot test was carried out with the help of five people to avoid the errors of the content and potential misinterpretation from the translations.

4.4   Results

The purpose of this thesis is to study the effect of relationship marketing tactics on customer loyalty in the Taiwanese market. After data cleaning, the mean was calculated for each variable using the data from the questionnaire items. As for the operation, the software SPSS was employed to analyze the hypothesized relationships between variables. The significance level was set at $p=0.05$ for all the tests. To begin with, a summary of the descriptive statistics of each construct would be shown together in Table 2 below. Although the moderating variables "product category involvement" and "relationship proneness" were beyond the scope of this research, the statistics like the mean and standard deviation would still be presented here for the references.

Descriptive statistics for all constructs

All results discussed hereafter are based on the questionnaire, which mostly used a Likert scale for the evaluation of the variables, as mentioned in chapter 4.3. This means that a specific value is given to each level of the Likert scale with which the results will be evaluated. These values are the following:

- The first level of the Likert scale represents the category "strongly disagree". This level will be given a value of 1.
- The second level is "disagree". This level will be given a value of 2.
- The third level is "somewhat disagree". This level will be given a value of 3.
- The fourth level is "neither agree nor disagree". This level will be given a value of 4.
- The fifth level equals the category "somewhat agree". This level will be given a value of 5.
- The sixth level is "agree". This level will be given a value of 6.
- The last level of the Likert scale is "strongly agree". It will be given a value of 7.

As for behavioral loyalty, the percentage of the total expenditure spent on the store (1-100%) were divided by 10 to match the range of the scale value of patronage frequency (1-10).

With these values assigned, the results are calculated as shown in Table 2 below. Table 2 includes the mean, standard deviation and the variance of the constructs. Among all the tactics, direct mail has the least average scoring (M=3.84) while the marketer-dominated information quality (M=5.20) and service content quality (M=5.11) on social media are the two highest perceived tactics from the respondents' perspective. Based on the average value of the 7-point Likert scale (3.5), respondents appeared to be aware of the relationship investment (M=4.72) and perceived relationship quality (M=4.98) positively. As for behavioral loyalty, the mean score 5.22 indicates the positive loyalty level from the respondents. Last but not least, the participants showed a high level of involvement with apparel products (M=5.80) and a strong tendency of engaging in relationships (M=5.31).

Table 2. Descriptive statistics

Construct	M	SD	Variance
Direct Mail	3.84	1.64	2.70
Preferential Treatment	4.42	1.46	2.13
Interpersonal Communication	4.23	1.81	3.27
Tangible Rewards	4.53	1.55	2.40
Perceived marketer-dominated information quality	5.20	1.28	1.63
Perceived interaction quality	4.99	1.44	2.07
Perceived service content quality	5.11	1.22	1.49
Perceived relationship investment	4.72	1.46	2.12
Relationship quality	4.98	1.05	1.11

Behavioral loyalty	5.22	1.85	3.43
Product category involvement	5.80	1.02	1.04
Relationship proneness	5.31	1.16	1.34

Hypothesis testing

Linear regression analysis was employed to test the theoretical hypotheses. For hypotheses H1-H7, a multiple linear regression was used to analyze the effect of all the tactics combined. The overall model summary yields 0.739 for R^2 and 0.727 for adjusted R^2 as shown in Table 3, which indicates that the regression model accounts for approximately 72% of the variance of perceived relationship investment (dependent variable). Furthermore, the p-value is less than the significance level ($p<0.05$). Generally speaking, a high F value (F=59.51) also suggests a good fit with the independent variables by assessing all the coefficients jointly.

Table 3. ANOVA result

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	241.366	7	34.481	59.514	.000[b]
Residual	85.168	147	0.579		
Total	326.534	154			

Table 4 below indicates the significance level of each hypothesized relationship. In examining H1-h4 with original tactics from De Wulf et al. (2001), only interpersonal communication (H3) and tangible rewards (H4) have significant positive impacts on the perceived relationship investment. Both tests gave a p-value less than 0.05, which proves the hypotheses to be significant at the 95% level. However, direct mail (H1) and preferential treatment (H2) are not supported by the test result, with a p-value 0.1 and 0.08 respectively.

On the other hand, among the three RM tactics on social media suggested by Kang & Kim (2017), both perceived marketer-dominated information quality (H5) and perceived interaction quality (H6) carry significant impacts on perceived relationship investment. These two hypotheses are supported based on the p-value 0.022 for H5 and 0.005 for H6. As for the perceived service content quality (H7), the result turned out to be far from significant at the 95% level (p=0.646).

To conclude, a higher perceived level of interpersonal communication, tangible rewards, marketer-dominated information quality and interaction quality on social media lead to a higher level of perceived relationship investment. In particular, an increase in one level of the Likert scale for interpersonal communication will on average lead to an increased perception of relationship investment of 0.306 on the Likert scale, keeping all other variables constant. Furthermore, an increase of one level on the Likert scale for tangible rewards will averagely lead to an increased

perception of relationship investment of 0.237 on the Likert scale, again keeping all other factors unchanged. For the variables adopted from Kang & Kim (2017), similar effects are observed. For the perceived marketer-dominated information quality, an increase in one level on the Likert scale results in an increase of relationship investment of 0.164 on the Likert scale, with all else unchanged. In the case of perceived interaction quality, an increase of one level on the Likert scale will on average induce an increase of perceived investment of 0.158 on the Likert scale, holding other things constant. Among these four significant tactics, interpersonal communication has the strongest impact on perceived relationship investment (standardized beta=0.381).

Table 4. Multiple linear regression result (H1-H7)

| Model | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. |
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	0.030	0.309		0.098	0.922
Direct Mail	0.073	0.044	0.082	1.657	0.100
Preferential Treatment	0.129	0.073	0.130	1.761	0.080
Interpersonal Communication	0.306	0.055	0.381	5.549	0.000
Tangible Rewards	0.237	0.058	0.252	4.064	0.000
Perceived marketer-dominated information quality	0.164	0.071	0.144	2.313	0.022
Perceived interaction quality	0.158	0.055	0.156	2.876	0.005
Perceived service content quality	-0.034	0.073	-0.028	-0.461	0.646
	a. Dependent Variable: Perceived relationship investment				

For the second part of the analysis, H8 proposes that a higher perceived level of relationship investment leads to better relationship quality. The finding confirms this hypothesis to be valid with a p-value less than 0.05 (as shown in Table 5). Customers who perceive more relationship investments experience a more positive relationship quality with the retailer. A scatter plot with the linear regression line is also shown below to demonstrate the relationship between these two variables. The R^2 score 0.527 suggests that approximately 52.7% of the variance in relationship quality can be explained by perceived relationship investment.

Table 5. Simple linear regression result (H8)

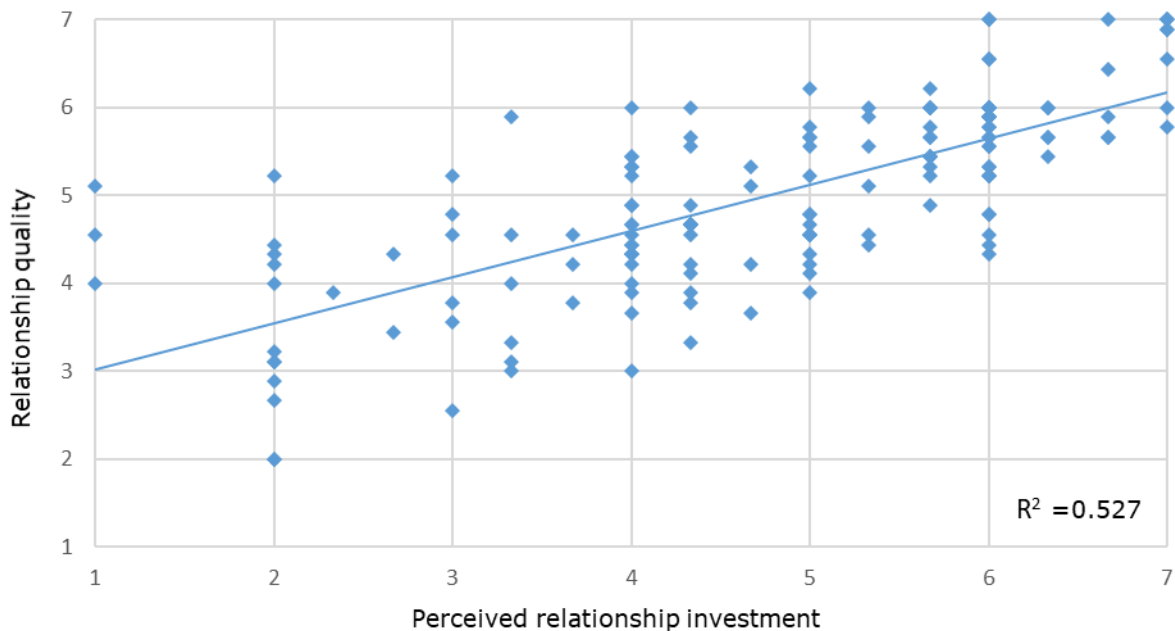| Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	2.502	0.199		12.592	0.000
Perceived relationship investment	0.525	0.04	0.726	13.048	0.000
	a. Dependent Variable: Relationship quality				

Figure 5. Scatter plot with linear regression line (H8)

Lastly, H9 states that the higher relationship quality results in higher levels of behavioral loyalty from the customers. The R^2 for this hypothesized model indicates that only 10.3% of the behavioral loyalty can be explained by the correlation of relationship quality and behavioral loyalty. Nonetheless, relationship quality still revealed a significant relationship with behavioral loyalty as predicted (p-value<0.05). To sum up, the statistic figures show that the positive paths of both H8 and H9 are supported by the sample data.

Table 6. Simple linear regression result (H9)

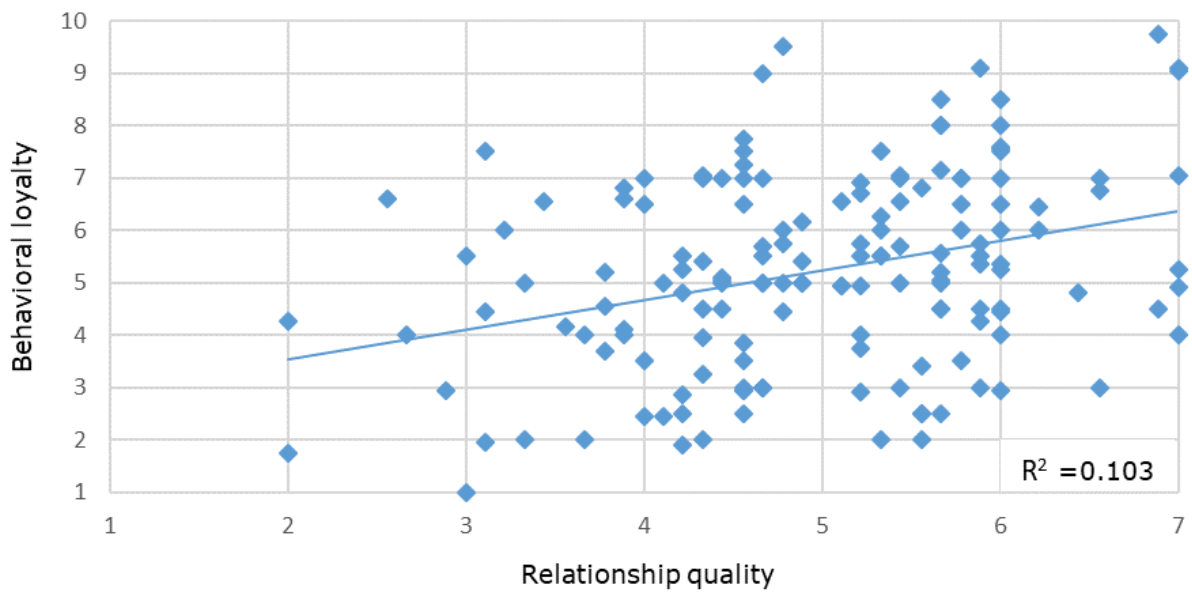| Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	2.407	0.686		3.509	0.001
Relationship quality	0.566	0.135	0.321	4.197	0.000
	a. Dependent Variable: Behavioral loyalty				

Figure 6. Scatter plot with linear regression line (H9)

5 Conclusions and Implications

This study set out with the aim of assessing the effects of relationship marketing tactics in the context of Taiwanese apparel retail industry. The findings contribute to the existing research regarding relationship marketing in several ways. First of all, the updated model includes new relationship marketing tactics which reflected the emergence of social media in the business world. These CRM tactics on social media together with the four tactics from the paper of De Wulf et al. (2001) demonstrate what retailers could do to shape customers' perceptions of relationship investment. Prior literature about relationship marketing hardly paid attention to pull together new tactics and investigate the impacts collectively. Second, the study improved the generalizability of the findings from De Wulf et al. (2001) by conducting the survey in an Asian country. Apart from the three countries (US, Belgium and the Netherlands) in which the prior investigation was carried out by De Wulf et al. (2001), the relationships between perceived relationship investment and relationship quality and the positive path from relationship quality to behavioral loyalty were also examined and confirmed with the data from Taiwanese market. The result provides empirical evidence that reinforced the support regarding the second half of the conceptual model (H8& H9).

With respect to the main research question, mixed evidence was found regarding the impacts of relationship marketing tactics (H1-H7).

No empirical support was found for the hypothesized influence from direct mail (H1). A likely explanation for this finding might be that the technology these days allows the information to be delivered via more efficiently targeted marketing than direct mailing (Mitchell, 2003). For instance, digital ads marketing has become the top ads display channel in Taiwan (GFK, 2017). In 2017, 60% of the advertisements in the retail industry and information sharing was spread around through digital ads marketing. People search for information online more than on print media. This shift might be one of the reasons why direct mails are losing the impact in the Taiwanese market.

As for the rejected hypothesis of preferential treatment (H2), this result accords with the findings from De Wulf et al. (2001). They suggested that customers might not appreciate being openly treated differently and favored above other people. Plus, preferential treatments might trigger trade-offs like negative bystander effects on other customers (Steinhoff & Palmatier, 2016). With the non-significant result, it is implied that the retailers should not focus on investing in this tactic and avoid putting customers in an uncomfortable situation.

The hypotheses for interpersonal communication and tangible rewards are both supported by the data analysis, which were consistent with those of De Wulf et al. (2001). Interpersonal communication (H3) proved to be the most effective determinant of perceived relationship investment. This finding mirrors the fact that Taiwanese people score high in the "collectivism" dimension from Hofstede's (1987) theory of national culture. In the high collectivistic society, people tend to rely on networks and desire a sense of belonging in a group. Considering the preferences of

Taiwanese culture for a tightly-knit social framework, it is very likely that customers enjoy bonding with store employees and develop friendships. This demonstrates a great opportunity for retailers operating in Taiwanese apparel markets. Store management can focus on finding the right personnel with strong social skills and a caring, friendly manner. Also, investing in training and motivating the employees to care for customers would create benefits for retailers in terms of improved perceptions of relationship investment.

As for tangible rewards (H4), the positive effects on perceived relationship investment are confirmed significant. Although competitors can more easily imitate this tactic, the presence of tangible rewards is still considered helpful in improving customer retention according to the result. In order to avoid the "wear-out" effect resulting from the widespread of tangible rewards, the retailers might need to fine-tune and limit the number of gifts or discounts. Nonetheless, it is worthwhile for retailers to invest in such tactic considering its significant impact as shown in the result.

Surprisingly, among the three tactics adopted from the work of Kang & Kim (2017), perceived service content quality (H7) is the only tactic that turned out to be insignificant. The hypothesized path from perceived service content quality in social media to perceived relationship investment is not statistically supported. It might be simply less powerful in the presence of the other tactics and less valued by the customers. A further study with more investigations could be done to gain clearer insights into the reasoning behind this finding.

On the other hand, perceived marketer-dominated information quality (H5) and perceived interaction quality (H6) in social media were found to be positively associated with perceived relationship investments. This result indicates that retailers could improve customers' perception of the relationship efforts by providing comprehensive marketer-dominated information, such as deals, special promotions and discounts (Kang & Kim, 2017). Also, customers acknowledge the efforts made by the retailer in maintaining the relationships when they can freely interact with others and share content around on the social media platform. This echoed with the collectivism culture background which explains the importance of networking and being connected to Taiwanese people. Moreover, according to eMarketer's survey in 2016, Taiwan is one of the most mobile countries in the world with 73.4% of the smartphone user penetration (eMarketer, 2016). Being the second biggest user of mobile data in the world, it is safe to say that people in Taiwan are connected online more than ever (Morgan, 2018). Companies should take advantage of this phenomena by designing social media programs that motivate customers to engage and share information. For example, interactive digital advertising and virtual brand communities could be two effective ways of marketing communication to develop relationships in social media (Chi, 2011). In short, the emergence of social media has called for more investments from business and undoubtedly influenced the development of relationship marketing strategies.

Last but not least, this study provided empirical evidence for the sub-questions "Do RM tactics improve customer loyalty?" and "If so, how do these tactics influence customer loyalty?". According to the conceptual model, relationship marketing tactics influence customers' perception of

relationship investment, which plays an important role in determining relationship quality and ultimately behavioral loyalty. These two hypothesized paths (H8& H9) are both supported in the analysis of the sample data set. However, the low R^2 score of H9 indicates that there might be other potential omitted variables in explaining the variation of behavioral loyalty. It is interesting to note that relationship quality might not be sufficient for predicting behavioral loyalty despite of its significant impact. Still, these findings support the idea that customers feel obliged to reciprocate the retailer's relationship investment by showing their loyalty in return (Bagozzi, 1995). To conclude, retailers should implement relationship marketing by investing more in consumer relationships with RM tactics since it will eventually pay off with increased consumer loyalty.

6 Limitations and Directions for future research

Despite of the empirical evidence and implications concluded above, the findings are subject to a few limitations.

First of all, the method of data collection restricts the generalizability of the results. The sample data was mainly collected through a link provided via social media platforms. Respondents were those who have accounts on Facebook and were relatively active on social media platforms. Generally speaking, these groups of people are also at a younger age. Moreover, this study relied on the accessibility and proximity of convenience sampling. It is a non-probability approach which can't rule out sampling bias. To conclude, the sample data might not be representative of the entire population in Taiwan. For future study, applying simple random sampling or quota sampling based on age or gender is suggested for bias-free insights on this topic.

Second, the omission of important independent variables imposes limitation for this study. There might be other crucial factors influencing customers' purchasing decision, such as price, promotion, quality of the products, reputation of the store and so on. As shown with the R^2 score for H9 (R^2 =0.103), the model can still be greatly improved. However, due to lack of time and resource, it's not the aim of this study to be thorough and complete by analyzing all the potential factors. Moreover, it would be interesting for future studies to compare the direct/indirect impact to customers' behavioral loyalty from elements like 4P (product, promotion, price and place) together with those from relationship marketing tactics.

Third, it was unfortunate to leave out the moderating variables: relationship proneness, and product category involvement, due to limited time and scope of this study. In most of the sample data sets in the study of De Wulf et al. (2001), these two moderators showed evidence of their intensifying influence on the effectiveness of perceived relationship investments. In this study, the respondents also showed high product category involvement (M=5.80) and relationship proneness (M=5.31). These customer-related factors might also help strengthen the impact of perceived relationship investment in shaping relationship quality in the context of Taiwanese apparel retail industry. Thus, for further improvement of this study, it could be fruitful to compare data in the high and low level of such customer characteristics.

Fourth, customer loyalty in this study was measured based on the behavioral dimension, which included share of wallet and repeated consumptions. These two measurements provided a clear and simple way to evaluate customer loyalty. However, assessing the value solely based on this construct might not be sufficient and thorough. Loyal customers can create value for the firm in various ways (Kumar et al., 2010). For example, the more satisfied a customer is, the more possible that he/she influences other prospects through persuasive communications (e.g., word of mouth). Therefore, it is suggested that future researches could include other indicators in better representing the whole picture of behavioral loyalty.

Fifth, this thesis referred a lot from the work of Kang & Kim (2017) regarding CRM tactics through social media and their perspectives in the formulation of hypotheses. There was not enough information about the direct influence of these tactics and perceived relationship investments found outside the literature review from Kang & Kim (2017). Due to the limited research and evidence regarding the role of social media in relationship marketing, there is still room for improvement in the theoretical background of this part of the thesis. Furthermore, relationships developed in social media could be more complicated than simply the difference like regular and non-regular clients. For example, Ballantine & Brett (2004) outlined a typology of four types of relationships of media users: devotees, insiders, tourists, and minglers. Each group of people possesses different levels of social ties to the brand or other members. Thus, there might be different tactics required to satisfy the customers, such as providing for informational needs, facilitating interactive environments, or even co-creating contents. Simply put, there are potentially more effective tactics for different types of relationships in social media which have not been closely examined to date. Ideally, it would take a whole separate study in order to analyze the dynamics in social media and incorporate with relationship marketing strategies. To keep up with the new age of web 2.0, it should be a prioritized research field for future studies regarding other potential relationship marketing tactics on social media.

Appendix

Part 1. Introduction

親愛的受訪者　您好：

非常感謝您協助填寫這份問卷，此份問卷目的在於探討關係行銷相關議題。

所有的資料僅供此碩士論文研究分析之用，採取不具名方式且不會公開個人資料。

本問卷已翻譯成中文方便閱讀，英文為輔助之用若無需要可以忽略。

請安心填答。

回答此問卷大概會占用您 5 至 7 分鐘的時間，謝謝您的協助。

敬祝

　　　健康　順遂

　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　楊甯雅　敬上

Dear Respondent,

I am Ning Ya Yang, a master student from Hasselt University, Belgium.

This is a survey for my master thesis regarding relationship marketing.

It takes about 5-7 minutes to complete.

This is an anonymous survey, all the data gathered through this questionnaire would be used exclusively for the purpose of this research.

Thank you for participating in the survey, your feedback is much appreciated!

Part 2 Filter question

Q1. 您有沒有在服飾店買過衣服?Have you ever made purchases in apparel retail stores?

　　有 Yes　無 No

Part 3 Questions

針對接下來問卷中的所有敘述，請根據您的經驗中"最常拜訪的那家服飾店"來回答。For the following questions & statements, please answer based on your experience with "the one store that you visited most frequently".

(The answer scale used is **7 Likert scale** as shown below.)

○	○	○	○	○	○	○
非常同意 Strongly agree	同意 Agree	有點同意 Somewhat agree	不同意也不反對 Neither agree nor disagree	有點不同意 Somewhat disagree	不同意 Disagree	非常不同意 Strongly disagree

Direct mail

1. 這家商店經常發郵件給常客。This store often sends mailings to regular customers.

2. 這家商店透過郵件提供最新消息給常客。This store keeps regular customers informed through mailings.

3. 這家商店經常發透過宣傳手冊提供消息給常客。This store often informs regular customers through brochures.

Preferential treatment

4. 比起一般客戶，這家商店對常客付出更大心力。This store makes greater efforts for regular customers than for nonregular customers.

5. 比起一般客戶，這家商店針對常客提供更好的服務。This store offers better service to regular customers than to nonregular customers.

6. 比起一般客戶，這家商店為常客做得更多。This store does more for regular customers than for nonregular customers.

Interpersonal communication

7. 這家店員工會花時間來認識常客。This store takes the time to personally get to know regular customers.

8. 這家店員工會與常客聊天。This store often holds personal conversations with regular customers.

9. 這家店員工會詢問關心常客的狀況。This store often inquires about the personal welfare of regular customers.

Tangible rewards

10. 這家店會獎勵常客的光顧。This store rewards regular customers for their patronage.

11. 這家店會提供更多福利給經常消費的顧客。This store offers regular customers something extra because they keep buying there.

12. 這家店會提供折扣給經常惠顧的客戶。This store offers discounts to regular customers for their patronage.

Perceived marketer-dominated information quality

13. 這個賣家的社群網站推廣他們值得信賴。This retailer's SNS promotes that they are trustworthy.

14. 這個賣家的社群網站提供資訊或廣告讓人覺得在他們店家消費是可靠的。This retailer's SNS provides information/advertisements that argue that it is secure to buy from them.

15. 這個賣家的社群網站提供資訊或廣告說明客戶隱私權不會在網路購物時被侵犯。This retailer's SNS provides information/advertisements that say privacy will not be invaded when something is bought online.

Perceived interaction quality

16. 這個賣家的社群網站讓客戶能分享產品內容、服務及各種資訊給其他人。This retailer's SNS enables customers to share content/services/information with others.
17. 客戶能在這個賣家的社群網站上與其他人對話、評價或交換意見。Conversation, review, and opinion exchange with others are possible through this retailer's SNS.
18. 客戶能在這個賣家的社群網站上與賣家及其他人交流並感到與他人連結。This retailer's SNS enables customers to interact with each other and this store and to feel connected.

Perceived service content quality

19. 在這個賣家的社群網站上很容易找到客戶權益及政策的相關資訊。In this retailer's SNS, one can easily find information/ content related to customers' policies (e.g., privacy and dispute details).
20. 在這個賣家的社群網站上很容易找到產品或服務項目的相關資訊。In this retailer's SNS, I can easily find details about products and/or services.
21. 在這個賣家的社群網站上很容易找到客戶服務的相關資訊。In this retailer's SNS, I can easily find details about customer service.
22. 在這個賣家的社群網站上很容易找到聯繫資訊（例如信箱、電話等）。In this retailer's SNS, I can easily find contact information (e.g., email addresses, phone numbers, etc.).
23. 在這個賣家的社群網站上很容易找到一般資訊（例如公司目標或營業人資訊等）。In this retailer's SNS, I can easily find a firm's general information (e.g., goals, owners, etc.).

Perceived relationship investment

24. 這家店會付出心力增加常客的忠誠度。This store makes efforts to increase regular customers' loyalty.
25. 這家店會做出各種努力改善其與常客的關係。This store makes various efforts to improve its tie with regular customers.
26. 這家店非常在乎維繫常客。This store really cares about keeping regular customers.

Relationship quality

27. 身為常客，我和這家店有很好的關係。As a regular customer, I have a high-quality relationship with this store.
28. 這家店對常客付出的努力讓我感到滿意。I am happy with the efforts this store is making towards regular customers like me.
29. 我很滿意自己與這家店的關係。I am satisfied with the relationship I have with this store.
30. 這家店能讓我感到信任。This store gives me a feeling of trust.
31. 我相信這家店。I have trust in this store.

32. 這家店給我一種值得信賴的印象。This store gives me a trustworthy impression.

33. 我願意為了繼續當這家店的客戶而多付出一點。I am willing 'to go the extra mile" to remain a customer of this store.

34. 我對這家店很忠誠。I feel loyal towards this store.

35. 即使這家店變的比較難到達，我還是會繼續在跟他們消費。Even if this store would be more difficult to reach, I would still keep buying there.

Behavioral loyalty

36. 在這家店的消費通常占你買衣服的總花費幾成? What percentage of your total expenditures for clothing do you spend in this store? (請拉動至您覺得適當的百分比。Please drag the slide to indicate the percentage.)

    0   10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

37. 十次中有幾次買衣服的時候你會選擇光顧這家店? Of the 10 times you select a store to buy clothes at, how many times do you select this store? (請依照您的經驗選擇頻率相對應之值。Please chose the number that indicate the frequency.)

    0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

Product category involvement

38. 總的來說，我是一個會重視自己買什麼衣服的人。Generally, I am someone who finds it important what clothes he or she buys.

39. 總的來說，我是一個對穿著感興趣的人。Generally, I am someone who is interested in the kind of clothing he or she buys.

40. 總的來說，我覺得買什麼樣的衣服對我影響很大。Generally, I am someone for whom it means a lot what clothes he or she buys.

Relationship proneness

41. 總的來說，我會喜歡成為某間服飾店的固定常客。Generally, I am someone who likes to be a regular customer of an apparel store.

42. 總的來說，我會想要固定去同一家服飾店。Generally, I am someone who wants to be a steady customer of the same apparel store.

43. 總的來說，我會為了去同一家服飾店而多付出一點。Generally, I am someone who is willing to "to go the extra mile" to buy at the same apparel store.

Part 4 Demographic Questions

44. 請問您的年齡? How old are you? _____

45. 請問您的性別? What is your gender?

Male / Female / Others

References

Abramson, N. R., & Ai, J. X. (1998). Practising Relationship Marketing in Southeast Asia: Reducing Uncertainty and Improving Performance. *MIR: Management International Review, 38*(SPEISS), 113-143.

Anderson, J. C., & Narus, J. A. (1990). A Model of Distributor Firm and Manufacturer Firm Working Partnerships. *Journal of Marketing, 54*(1), 42-58. doi:10.1177/002224299005400103

Babin, B. J., et al. (1994). Work and/or Fun: Measuring Hedonic and Utilitarian Shopping Value. *Journal of Consumer Research, 20*(4), 644-656. doi:10.1086/209376

Bagozzi, R. P. (1995). Reflections on Relationship Marketing in Consumer Markets. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 23*(4), 272-277. doi:10.1177/009207039502300406

Ballantine, P. W., & Brett, A. S. M. (2004). Forming Parasocial Relationships in Online Communities. *Advances in Consumer Research, 32*, 197.

Becker, L. C. (1986). *Reciprocity*: Routledge.

Berry, L. L. (1995). Relationship Marketing of Services--Growing Interest, Emerging Perspectives. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 23*(4), 236-245. doi:10.1177/009207039502300402

Bloemer, J. M. M., & Kasper, H. D. P. (1995). The Complex Relationship between Consumer Satisfaction and Brand Loyalty. *Journal of Economic Psychology, 16*(2), 311-329. doi:10.1016/0167-4870(95)00007-B

Bolton, R. N. (1998). A Dynamic Model of the Duration of the Customer's Relationship with a Continuous Service Provider: The Role of Satisfaction. *Marketing Science, 17*(1), 45-65. doi:10.1287/mksc.17.1.45

Brandtzæg, P. B., & Heim, J. (2009, 2009//). Why People Use Social Networking Sites. Paper presented at the Online Communities and Social Computing, Berlin, Heidelberg.

Cavusgil, S. T., et al. (2018). Middle-Class Consumers in Emerging Markets: Conceptualization, Propositions, and Implications for International Marketers. *Journal of International Marketing, 26*(3), 94-108. doi:10.1509/jim.16.0021

Chi, H.-H. (2011). Interactive digital advertising vs. virtual brand community: Exploratory study of user motivation and social media marketing responses in Taiwan. *Journal of Interactive Advertising, 12*(1), 44-61.

Christy, R., et al. (1996). Relationship marketing in consumer markets. *Journal of Marketing Management, 12*(1-3), 175-187. doi:10.1080/0267257X.1996.9964407

Crosby, L. A., et al. (1990). Relationship Quality in Services Selling: An Interpersonal Influence Perspective. *Journal of Marketing, 54*(3), 68-81. doi:10.1177/002224299005400306

Dai, H., et al. (2011). ANTECEDENTS OF ONLINE SERVICE QUALITY, COMMITMENT AND LOYALTY. *The Journal of Computer Information Systems, 52*(2), 1.

De Wulf, K., et al. (2001). Investments in Consumer Relationships: A Cross-Country and Cross-Industry Exploration. *Journal of Marketing, 65*(4), 33-50. doi:10.1509/jmkg.65.4.33.18386

DeLone, W. H., & McLean, E. R. (1992). Information Systems Success: The Quest for the Dependent Variable. *Information Systems Research, 3*(1), 60-95. doi:10.1287/isre.3.1.60

DeLone, W. H., & McLean, E. R. (2003). The DeLone and McLean Model of Information Systems Success: A Ten-Year Update. *Journal of Management Information Systems, 19*(4), 9-30. doi:10.1080/07421222.2003.11045748

Dick, A. S., & Basu, K. (1994). Customer Loyalty: Toward an Integrated Conceptual Framework. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 22*(2), 99-113. doi:10.1177/0092070394222001

Duncan, T., & Moriarty, S. E. (1998). A Communication-Based Marketing Model for Managing Relationships. *Journal of Marketing, 62*(2), 1-13. doi:10.2307/1252157

Dwyer, F. R., et al. (1987). Developing Buyer-Seller Relationships. *Journal of Marketing, 51*(2), 11-27. doi:10.2307/1251126

eMarketer (2016). Mobile Taiwan: A Look at a Highly Mobile Market. Retrieved from https://www.emarketer.com/Article/Mobile-Taiwan-Look-Highly-Mobile-Market/1014877

Falk, A., & Fischbacher, U. (2006). A theory of reciprocity. *Games and Economic Behavior, 54*(2), 293-315. doi:10.1016/j.geb.2005.03.001

Ganesan, S. (1994). Determinants of Long-Term Orientation in Buyer-Seller Relationships. *Journal of Marketing, 58*(2), 1-19. doi:10.2307/1252265

Garbarino, E., & Johnson, M. S. (1999). The Different Roles of Satisfaction, Trust, and Commitment in Customer Relationships. *Journal of Marketing, 63*(2), 70-87. doi:10.2307/1251946

GFK (2017). 2017 年台灣數位廣告量統計報告 [2017 Digital advertising statistics report]. Retrieved from https://drive.google.com/file/d/1EiHM98tA0-YD6VwxEHMU6DuDQD2gUN6x/view

Gordon, M. E., et al. (1998). Relationship marketing effectiveness: The role of involvement. *Psychology and Marketing, 15*(5), 443-459. doi:10.1002/(SICI)1520-6793(199808)15:5<443::AID-MAR3>3.0.CO;2-7

Grönroos, C. (1994). From Marketing Mix to Relationship Marketing: Towards a Paradigm Shift in Marketing. *Management Decision, 32*(2), 322-339. doi:10.1108/00251749710169729

Grönroos, C. (1996). Relationship marketing: strategic and tactical implications. *Management Decision, 34*(3), 5-14. doi:10.1108/00251749610113613

Grönroos, C. (2004). The relationship marketing process: communication, interaction, dialogue, value. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing, 19*(2), 99-113. doi:10.1108/08858620410523981

Gummesson, E. (1994). Making Relationship Marketing Operational. *International Journal of Service Industry Management, 5*(5), 5-20. doi:10.1108/09564239410074349

Gummesson, E., et al. (2004). Return on relationships (ROR): the value of relationship marketing and CRM in business-to-business contexts. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing, 19*(2), 136-148. doi:10.1108/08858620410524016

Gundlach, G. T., et al. (1995). The Structure of Commitment in Exchange. *Journal of Marketing, 59*(1), 78-92. doi:10.2307/1252016

Gwinner, K. P., et al. (1998). Relational Benefits in Services Industries: The Customer's Perspective. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 26*(2), 101-114. doi:10.1177/0092070398262002

Harker, M. J., & Egan, J. (2006). The Past, Present and Future of Relationship Marketing. *Journal of Marketing Management, 22*(1-2), 215-242. doi:10.1362/026725706776022326

Hart, C. W., & Johnson, M. D. (1999). Growing the trust relationship*8*(1), 8.

Havenstein, H. (2008). Companies Looking for New Ways To Measure Web 2.0*42*(45), 14.

Hawksworth, J., & Chan, D. (2015). *The World in 2050: Will the shift in global economic power continue?*

Heller Baird, C., & Parasnis, G. (2011). From social media to social customer relationship management. *Strategy & Leadership, 39*(5), 30-37. doi:10.1108/10878571111161507

Hennig-Thurau, T., et al. (2002). Understanding Relationship Marketing Outcomes: An Integration of Relational Benefits and Relationship Quality. *Journal of Service Research, 4*(3), 230-247. doi:10.1177/1094670502004003006

Hennig-Thurau, T., & Klee, A. (1997). The impact of customer satisfaction and relationship quality on customer retention: A critical reassessment and model development. *Psychology and Marketing, 14*(8), 737-764. doi:10.1002/(SICI)1520-6793(199712)14:8<737::AID-MAR2>3.0.CO;2-F

Herter, M. M., et al. (2014). "Man, I Shop Like a Woman!" The Effects of Gender and Emotions on Consumer Shopping Behaviour Outcomes. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management, 42*(9), 780-804. doi:10.1108/IJRDM-03-2013-0066

Hoegl, M., & Gemuenden, H. G. (2001). Teamwork Quality and the Success of Innovative Projects: A Theoretical Concept and Empirical Evidence. Organization Science, 12(4), 435-449. doi:10.1287/orsc.12.4.435.10635

Hofstede, G. (1987). *Culture's consequences: international differences in work-related values* (Vol. 5). Beverly Hills, Calif: Sage.

Houston, F. S., & Gassenheimer, J. B. (1987). Marketing and Exchange. *Journal of Marketing, 51*(4), 3-18. doi:10.2307/1251244

Hudson, S., et al. (2016). The influence of social media interactions on consumer–brand relationships: A three-country study of brand perceptions and marketing behaviors. *International Journal of Research in Marketing, 33*(1), 27-41. doi:10.1016/j.ijresmar.2015.06.004

Hwang, Y., & Kim, D. J. (2007). Customer self-service systems: The effects of perceived Web quality with service contents on enjoyment, anxiety, and e-trust. *Decision Support Systems, 43*(3), 746-760. doi:10.1016/j.dss.2006.12.008

IMF (2016). Too Slow for Too Long. Retrieved from https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/Issues/2016/12/31/Too-Slow-for-Too-Long

Kaleka, A., & Morgan, N. A. (2017). Which Competitive Advantage(s)? Competitive Advantage–Market Performance Relationships in International Markets. *Journal of International Marketing, 25*(4), 25-49. doi:10.1509/jim.16.0058

Kang, J.-Y. M., & Kim, J. (2017). Online customer relationship marketing tactics through social media and perceived customer retention orientation of the green retailer. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management: An International Journal, 21*(3), 298-316. doi:10.1108/JFMM-08-2016-0071

Kaplan, A. M., & Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media*53*(1), 59-68. doi:10.1016/j.bushor.2009.09.003

Kim, H.-Y., et al. (2012). Effect of consumer relationship proneness on perceived loyalty program attributes and resistance to change. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management, 40*(5), 376-387. doi:10.1108/09590551211222358

Kumar, V., et al. (2010). Undervalued or Overvalued Customers: Capturing Total Customer Engagement Value. *Journal of Service Research, 13*(3), 297-310. doi:10.1177/1094670510375602

Lacey, R., et al. (2007). Differential Effects of Preferential Treatment Levels on Relational Outcomes. *Journal of Service Research, 9*(3), 241-256. doi:10.1177/1094670506295850

Lee, J.-W., & Hong, K. (2012). Economic growth in Asia: Determinants and prospects. *Japan & The World Economy, 24*(2), 101-113. doi:10.1016/j.japwor.2012.01.005

Lewis, M. (2004). The Influence of Loyalty Programs and Short-Term Promotions on Customer Retention. *Journal of Marketing Research, 41*(3), 281-292. doi:10.1509/jmkr.41.3.281.35986

Li, Z. G., & Dant, R. P. (1997). An exploratory study of exclusive dealing in channel relationships. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 25*(3), 201-213. doi:10.1177/0092070397253002

Liang, T.-P., et al. (2011). What Drives Social Commerce: The Role of Social Support and Relationship Quality. *International Journal of Electronic Commerce, 16*(2), 69-90. doi:10.2753/JEC1086-4415160204

Lin, S.-Y. (2013). The Influence of Relational Selling Behavior on Relationship Quality: The Moderating Effect of Perceived Price and Customers' Relationship Proneness. *Journal of Relationship Marketing, 12*(3), 204-222. doi:10.1080/15332667.2013.816931

Malthouse, E. C., et al. (2013). Managing Customer Relationships in the Social Media Era: Introducing the Social CRM House. *Journal of Interactive Marketing, 27*(4), 270-280. doi:10.1016/j.intmar.2013.09.008

Metcalf, L. E., et al. (1992). Buyer-Seller Relationships: An Application of the IMP Interaction Model. *European Journal of Marketing, 26*(2), 27-46. doi:10.1108/03090569210010022

Mitchell, S. (2003). The new age of direct marketing. *Journal of Database Marketing, 10*(3), 219.

Mitra, K., et al. (1999). An examination of perceived risk, information search and behavioral intentions in search, experience and credence services. *Journal of Services Marketing, 13*(3), 208-228. doi:10.1108/08876049910273763

Mittal, B. (1995). A comparative analysis of four scales of consumer involvement. *Psychology and Marketing, 12*(7), 663-682. doi:10.1002/mar.4220120708

Möller, K., & Halinen, A. (2000). Relationship Marketing Theory: Its Roots and Direction. *Journal of Marketing Management, 16*(1-3), 29-54. doi:10.1362/026725700785100460

Molm, L. D. (2010). The Structure of Reciprocity. *Social Psychology Quarterly, 73*(2), 119-131. doi:10.1177/0190272510369079

Moorman, C., et al. (1992). Relationships between Providers and Users of Market Research: The Dynamics of Trust within and between Organizations. *Journal of Marketing Research, 29*(3), 314-328. doi:10.2307/3172742

Morgan, R. M., & Hunt, S. D. (1994). The Commitment-Trust Theory of Relationship Marketing. *Journal of Marketing, 58*(3), 20-38. doi:10.2307/1252308

Morgan S. (2018). Taiwan biggest user of mobile data in Asia, second in world. *Taiwan News.* Retrieved from https://www.taiwannews.com.tw/en/news/3488375

Odekerken-Schröder, G., et al. (2003). Strengthening outcomes of retailer–consumer relationships: The dual impact of relationship marketing tactics and consumer personality. *Journal of Business Research, 56*(3), 177-190. doi:10.1016/S0148-2963(01)00219-3

Olsen, S. O. (2007). Repurchase loyalty: The role of involvement and satisfaction. *Psychology and Marketing, 24*(4), 315-341. doi:10.1002/mar.20163

Piketty, T. (2014). *Capital in the twenty-first century*. Cambridge Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Reichheld, F. F., & Sasser, J. W. E. (1990). Zero defections: quality comes to services*68*(5), 105.

Reynolds, K. E., & Beatty, S. E. (1999). Customer benefits and company consequences of customer-salesperson relationships in retailing. *Journal of Retailing, 75*(1), 11-32. doi:10.1016/S0022-4359(99)80002-5

Saravanakumar, M., & SuganthaLakshmi, T. (2012). Social media marketing. *Life Science Journal*, *9*(4), 4444-4451.

Seol, S., et al. (2016). Continuance usage of corporate SNS pages: A communicative ecology perspective. *Information & Management, 53*(6), 740-751. doi:10.1016/j.im.2016.02.010

Sheth, J. N., & Parvatiyar, A. (1995). Relationship Marketing in Consumer Markets: Antecedents and Consequences. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 23*(4), 255-271. doi:10.1177/009207039502300405

Smith, B. (1998). Buyer-Seller Relationships: Bonds, Relationship Management, and Sex-Type. *Revue Canadienne des Sciences de l'Administration/Canadian Journal of Administrative Sciences, 15*(1), 76-92. doi:10.1111/j.1936-4490.1998.tb00153.x

Solomon, M. R., et al. (1985). A Role Theory Perspective on Dyadic Interactions: The Service Encounter. *Journal of Marketing, 49*(1), 99-111. doi:10.2307/1251180

Steinhoff, L., & Palmatier, R. W. (2016). Understanding loyalty program effectiveness: managing target and bystander effects. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 44*(1), 88-107. doi:10.1007/s11747-014-0405-6

The Stastical Portal (2015). Market demand of clothing in Taiwan from 2011 to 2018 (in billion U.S. dollars). Retrieved from https://www.statista.com/statistics/616629/taiwan-clothing-market-demand/

Too, L. H. Y., et al. (2001). Relationship Marketing and Customer Loyalty in a Retail Setting: A Dyadic Exploration. *Journal of Marketing Management, 17*(3-4), 287. doi:10.1362/0267257012652140

Trainor, K. J., et al. (2014). Social media technology usage and customer relationship performance: A capabilities-based examination of social CRM. *Journal of Business Research, 67*(6), 1201-1208. doi:10.1016/j.jbusres.2013.05.002

Wen, C.-H., et al. (2012). Mining shopping behavior in the Taiwan luxury products market. *Expert Systems With Applications, 39*(12), 11257-11268. doi:10.1016/j.eswa.2012.03.072

Zaichkowsky, J. L. (1994). The Personal Involvement Inventory: Reduction, Revision, and Application to Advertising. *Journal of Advertising, 23*(4), 59-70. doi:10.1080/00913367.1943.10673459