

Effects of Virtual Brand Community Experience on Brand Loyalty of Organic Food

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Abstract: Virtual brand community marketing gradually becomes the key for enterprises to gain competitive advantage under the new media environment. Therefore, this paper takes customers of organic food as respondents (N=483) to construct the model and empirically test the effect of virtual brand community experience on brand loyalty of organic food. The results show that each dimension of virtual brand community experience has a positive impact on user satisfaction and user trust. User satisfaction and user trust in virtual brand community have a positive impact on brand loyalty. User satisfaction has a positive effect on user trust. The above findings have important theoretical significance for the management of virtual brand community.

1. Introduction

With the rapid development of Internet, the interpersonal communication of consumers gradually changes from reality to network, and enterprises realize the importance of community marketing. Virtual brand community is an online community formed by consumers who like and identify with a certain brand. On this platform, consumers can participate in the production and transmission of products or services, which not only changes the consumption mode of people, but also greatly affects the marketing strategy of enterprises. Therefore, how to enable consumers to get a better experience on the community platform and promote consumer loyalty to corporate brands is extremely important.

Virtual brand community experience is also called community experience, which refers to the subjective feeling that users get in the process of using virtual community website^[1]. The research on virtual brand community mainly focused on three aspects. First is to explore the positive role of virtual brand community. The second is to investigate the motivation of consumer participation in community activities. The third is to focus on explaining the impact of consumer community activities on community and corporate brands. In addition, some foreign scholars have conducted research on the consumption behavior of organic food, but the research mainly focused on the consumer's consumption consciousness, purchasing attitude and the influence of brand equity on consumer behavior^[2]. However, there are still some shortcomings: firstly, although some scholars study community experience as a whole concept, But lack of virtual brand community experience dimension of the exploration. Secondly, previous studies tend to regard consumer attitude and community participation as antecedents variables of brand loyalty, while ignoring the role of consumer community experience. Finally, there is a lack of discussion on the formation from community experience to brand loyalty under the background of organic products community.

Therefore, what is the dimension of the virtual brand community experience? What is the effect mechanism of virtual brand community experience on brand loyalty? How to implement the virtual brand community marketing strategy to win the loyalty of consumers? This paper takes customers of organic food as respondents to construct model and empirically test impacts of community experience on the brand loyalty of organic food. Providing theoretical guidance for enterprises to formulate and optimize marketing strategies.

2. Hypotheses development and Conceptual Model

2.1 The impact of virtual brand community experience on user satisfaction

As an important concept in the field of marketing, customer satisfaction is the cognitive or emotional response formed by the customer after consuming products or services. Customer experience is the perception that the customer obtains through the contact and use of product. Sorooshian[3] argues that customer experience in online community can affect the perception of customer service quality and then affect consumer satisfaction. Qu et al.[4] shows that virtual community experience positively affects user satisfaction. Therefore, we propose the following hypotheses:

H1: virtual brand community experience has a positive impact on user satisfaction.

H1a: information experience has a positive impact on user satisfaction.

H1b: entertainment experience has a positive impact on user satisfaction.

H1c: interactive experience has a positive impact on user satisfaction.

2.2 The impact of virtual brand community experience on user trust

Trust is the honest and reliable of one side of transaction against the other side of the transaction. In the case of uncertainty, trust can reduce the purchase risk of customers, enhance the confidence of customers, and have a impact on customers' purchase behavior. Ning and Feng[5] shows that community experience significantly affects consumer attitudes towards brands in Xiaomi community. Hajer and Daniel[6] argues that online luxury brand fans' enjoyment and information content experience can affect consumer's brand emotion and trust. Therefore, we propose the following hypotheses:

H2: virtual brand community experience has a positive impact on user trust.

H2a: information experience has a positive impact on user trust.

H2b: entertainment experience has a positive impact on user trust.

H2c: interactive experience has a positive impact on user trust.

2.3 The impact of user satisfaction on brand loyalty in virtual brand community

Brand loyalty is a hot issue in the field of consumer behavior research. In the previous research literature, the research on brand loyalty is mainly focused on consumer repeat purchase behavior. Later, gradually shift to consumer attitude preference and so on. Now, scholars generally believe that brand loyalty is a multi-dimensional concept. Satisfaction is the basis of consumer brand loyalty. If enterprise wants to win consumer loyalty, first of all, it must win consumer satisfaction to brand. Liu and Sheng[7] based on the network background studied that consumer satisfaction with online services has a positive impact on their brand loyalty. Therefore, we propose the following hypotheses:

H3: user satisfaction has a positive impact on brand loyalty in virtual brand communities.

2.4 The impact of user trust on brand loyalty in virtual brand community

As an important factor of the relationship between consumers and brands, trust establishes a close emotional relationship between consumers and brand, and promotes consumer attachment to the brand, which will lead to a positive evaluation of the brand by consumers. UurBaer[8] shows that consumer experience has a positive impact on their trust, and the higher consumer trust in the brand, the higher consumer loyalty to the brand. Therefore, we propose the following hypotheses:

H4: user trust has a positive impact on brand loyalty in the virtual brand community

2.5 The impact of user satisfaction on user trust in virtual brand community

In the previous studies on the relationship between customer satisfaction and customer trust, studies show that customer satisfaction is the antecedent variable of customer trust, and customer trust is the result of continuous enhancement of customer satisfaction. Consumer trust in virtual brand community is based on community satisfaction, Bhuian^[9] pointed out that online user

satisfaction positively affects user trust. Therefore, we propose the following hypotheses:

H5: user satisfaction has a positive impact on user trust in the virtual brand community.

Based on the above research hypotheses, this paper proposes a conceptual model as shown in figure 1.

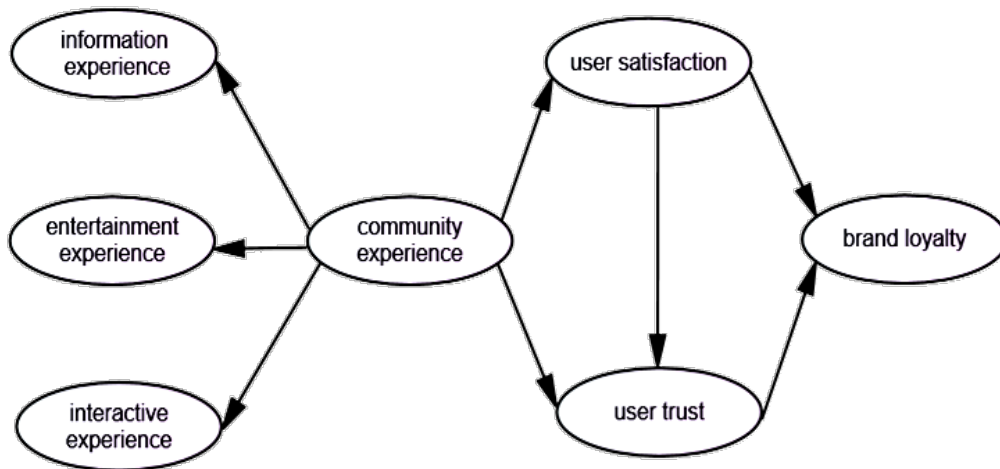


Fig 1 Conceptual Model

2.6 Method

Measures. The measurement of variables in this study mainly refer to the mature scale in previous studies, combining with the community background of organic food and the results of interviews with 20 students majoring in business administration, and making appropriate modifications in the expression of sentence meaning, etc. Finally, the measurement questions with variables are formed in this study. The virtual brand community experience was measured with nine items referring Nambisan^[10] and combined with organic food community background. User satisfaction was measured with four items referring McDougall and Levesque^[11]. User trust was measured with four items referring Mcknight^[12]. Brand loyalty mainly refers to Yi and Jeon^[13] measurement scale, which consists of four items. All variables were measured with the Likert scale seven.

Sample. In this study, customers of organic food are respondents. The questionnaire is mainly distributed online. A total of 655 questionnaires and 483 valid questionnaires were collected, and the effective questionnaire recovery rate was 73.7%. The descriptive statistics of the valid samples are as follows, in terms of gender: 43% males and 57% females; in terms of age: 2% under 20 years of age, 38% between the ages of 21 and 30, 44% between the ages of 31 and 40, 13% between the ages of 41 and 50, 1% between the ages of 51 and 60, 2% over the ages of 61; In terms of education: 3% at secondary level and below, 16% for secondary schools, 27% at tertiary level, 46% undergraduate, 5% postgraduates; In terms of occupation: 8% foreign joint ventures, 6% government sector, 22% Institutional organization, 15% state-owned enterprises, 25% private enterprise, 24% others; In terms of monthly income level: 7% under \$2000, 18% between \$3001 and \$4000, 21% between \$4001 and \$5000, 14% between \$5001 and \$6000, 7% between \$6001 and \$7000, 6% between \$7001 and \$8000, 14% over \$8000.

2.7 Data Analysis

Reliability and Validity

SPSS22.0 and Amos23.0 software were used to test the reliability and validity of the scale as shown in table 1 below. The C.R. values of all variables were between 0.84 and 0.90, and the Cronbach's Alpha values of all variables were between 0.78 and 0.88, which indicated that the scale had good reliability. In addition, the loading values of all items were between 0.73 and 0.86, and the AVE values were between 0.60 and 0.70, which indicated that the scale had good convergence validity.

Table 1 The results of reliability and validity of variables

Variables	Items	Loadings	T value	AVE	C.R.
information	XE1	0.77	—		
experience	XE2	0.84	18.08	0.64	0.84
$\alpha=0.81$	XE3	0.75	16.55		
entertainment	YE1	0.82	—		
experience	YE2	0.86	20.86	0.69	0.87
$\alpha=0.85$	YE3	0.81	19.65		
Interactive	HE1	0.84	—		
experience	HE2	0.85	20.31	0.65	0.85
$\alpha=0.84$	HE3	0.73	16.72		
	CS1	0.79	—		
user satisfaction	CS2	0.78	18.71	0.68	0.89
$\alpha=0.88$	CS3	0.82	19.17		
	CS4	0.82	19.02		
	CT1	0.84	—		
user trust	CT2	0.85	22.94	0.70	0.90
$\alpha=0.88$	CT3	0.85	21.61		
	CT4	0.82	19.98		
	BY1	0.80	—		
brand loyalty	BY2	0.83	18.12	0.60	0.85
$\alpha=0.78$	BY3	0.75	15.18		
	BY4	0.76	16.88		

As shown in Table 2, the AVE square root of each variable is greater than the correlation coefficient with other variables, and this research scale has good discriminant validity.

Table 2 Correlations and square root of AVE

	XE	YE	HE	CS	CT	BY
XE	0.80					
YE	0.62	0.84				
HE	0.44	0.58	0.82			
CS	0.65	0.48	0.26	0.34		
CT	0.69	0.55	0.52	0.45	0.48	
BY	0.28	0.52	0.38	0.27	0.42	0.25

2.8 Main Effect Results

In this study, Amos23.0 software is used to calculate the research model, and the structure diagram of the model is obtained (figure 2). The fitting indexes of the whole model are as follows: $\chi^2/df = 2.314$, GFI = 0.912, AGFI = 0.861, RMSEA = 0.050, NFI = 0.901, RFI = 0.917, IFI = 0.958, TLI = 0.922, CFI = 0.917, and most of indexes are up to requirements. This shows that the model fits well.

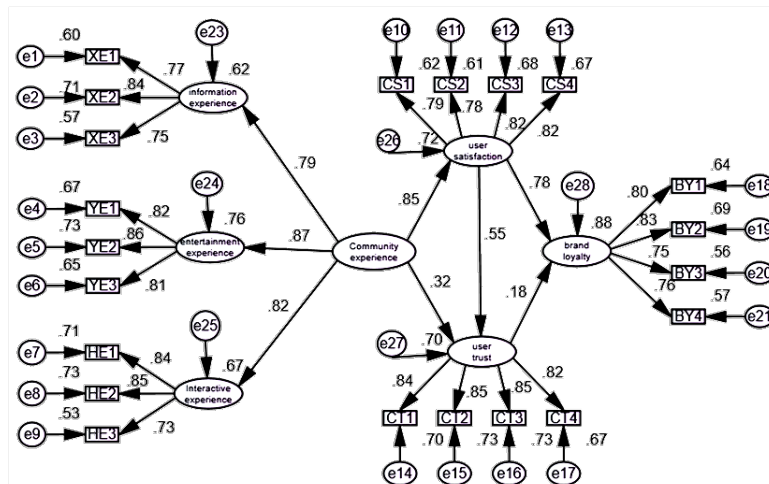


Fig. 2 Results of structural equation model

The main path coefficients of the model are shown in Table 3 below. It shows that all paths can pass the significance test, so all hypotheses are verified.

Table 3 Results of hypothesis

Relationship	Beta coefficient	S.E.	T value	P
XE←CE	0.79	-	-	***
YE←CE	0.87	0.075	15.840	***
HE←CE	0.82	0.090	13.786	***
CS←CE	0.85	-	-	***
CT←CE	0.32	0.134	3.614	***
CT←CS	0.55	0.111	6.381	***
BY←CS	0.78	-	-	***
BY←CT	0.18	0.039	4.562	***

3. Conclusions

Virtual brand community experience has a significantly positive impact on user satisfaction and user trust. From the path coefficients of each dimension to user satisfaction and user trust, we can see that entertainment experience has the greatest influence on user satisfaction and user trust, interactive experience is the second, and information experience is the least. User satisfaction has a positive impact on user trust. User satisfaction and user trust have a positive impact on brand loyalty. Comparing the influence of user satisfaction and user trust on brand loyalty, it is found that the positive impact of user satisfaction on brand loyalty is greater than that of user trust on brand loyalty, which indicates that there are differences between the two variables on brand loyalty.

The findings of this study can enlighten the management practice of virtual brand community. We therefore make the following recommendations. First, enterprises should focus on increasing the entertainment of the community. The results show that in the dimension of virtual brand community experience, entertainment experience has the greatest impact on customer satisfaction and trust, and then promotes customer brand loyalty. Therefore, enterprises should focus on enhancing the entertainment of the community. In the aspect of strengthening community entertainment, enterprises can improve the functions of community text, link, audio and video editing, and make the way of community entertainment more diversified. In addition, enterprises can also organize some recreational activities, design various incentive mechanisms, such as cumulative integration, to mobilize the enthusiasm of community members. In addition, when companies publish entertainment content, We can change the way of information dissemination and communicate with consumers in a more friendly way, which can enhance consumers' attention and reading of entertainment information, and make consumers more impressed. Second, enterprises should vigorously improve customer satisfaction. Creating unique experience for customers is a prerequisite for enterprises to win customer trust and loyalty. The results show that user satisfaction has a positive effect on user trust and loyalty. Therefore, in the process of virtual brand community marketing, enterprises should constantly seek effective ways and methods to improve customer satisfaction, understand the changes of consumer satisfaction and dissatisfaction, and strengthen the factors of satisfaction. And causes the consumer dissatisfied factor carries on the revision, and takes the related remedial measure. Third, enterprises should attach great importance to customer brand loyalty. Enterprises should implement customer brand loyalty management to establish, maintain and promote a long-term stable relationship between customers and brands. Through a wide range of market research, accurate positioning and analysis of customer needs, to find customer brand loyalty and disloyalty elements, to carry out customer brand loyalty management. In addition, in order to prevent the customer from losing and cultivate the customer brand loyalty, the comprehensive customer brand loyalty plan and strategy should be formulated in order to provide customers with a unique experience of satisfaction and gradually establish the customer loyalty to the ecological agricultural product brand.

The research also has the following limitations. First, due to time and other objective reasons,

this study is mainly to obtain cross-sectional data, rather than time series or panel data. Secondly, in the study of the relationship between virtual brand community experience and brand loyalty, this paper only introduces user satisfaction and trust as intermediary variables, and does not take into account the regulatory role of consumer community falling into, community identity and other variables. These variables may be considered for future research.

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