

Dose Online Brand Community Help Brands Increase Loyalty? -The Impact of Customer Citizenship Experience

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Abstract Since 2020, the rapid spread of the COVID-19 virus, border closures, and flight cancellations have directly or indirectly affected people's decisions and altered their travel plans. The current post-COVID-19 pandemic has changed people's daily lives, and it has also dramatically changed their travel habits and the tourism retailing industry. For this reason, new technologies are significantly altering the retail experiences of customers in an attempt to solve all of the difficulties associated with the pandemic. For example, customers today are accustomed to book hotel rooms and flight tickets online, are willing to use self-check-in systems, and also accept a variety of contactless services. This study utilized a PLS techniques to investigate how customer loyalty is affected by the characteristics of an online brand community-in this study, the Booking.com travel community, and to gain further insight into the mediating effect of the customer citizenship experience. The results show that online brand community is the antecedents of customer citizenship behavior and customer loyalty. The findings additionally suggest that the service quality offered by the online brand community has a direct impact on customer loyalty. Furthermore, it influences customer loyalty by acting as a mediator through the customer citizenship experience. Furthermore, the relationship quality of the online brand community has a direct influence on customer loyalty through the mediating role of customer citizenship experience. However, it does not directly affect customer loyalty on its own.

Keywords: *customer citizenship experience, COVID-19 pandemic, service quality, relationship quality, information quality, booking.com*

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1. Introduction

Following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Center for Responsible Travel [1] found that most European citizens were more interested in local travel activities. This study primarily explores changes in the consumer citizenship experience and travel behavior after the COVID-19 epidemic, as well as how the citizenship experience improves brand community qualities and increases customer loyalty.

Many consumers rely on social platforms due to the convenience of social networks; consumers share information and exchange opinions and experiences on google reviews and brand communities. Furthermore, people can view the most up-to-date travel comments and share their travel experiences in various online communities, especially in the post-pandemic travel recovery era. [2] discovered that around 22 percent of online consumers' exchange product reviews from the online brand communities, moreover, over 70% of communities'

followers influenced by the comments, reviews, and information provided in the official communities and changed their consuming behavior as a result.

The concept of an online brand community is comprised of multiple factors [3]. As found in the extant literature exploring positive effects of online platforms, majority include informational quality and service quality factors [4,5] argued that long standing customer relationships and the maturity of social network communities are vital in establishing relationship quality.

Some scholars believe that customer citizenship experience will affect customer loyalty and enthusiasm toward information-seeking. [6] held that brand involvement and loyalty have a significant influence, further arguing that involvement will affect the decision-making processes of customers toward purchases. Currently, brand involvement has also garnered the interest of the marketing and practical application fields. Additionally, [7] held while customers were willing to involve in a brand/product, they have higher customer loyalty, and product involvement affects brand involvement.

[8] found that heightened involvement among customers

in specific online brand communities indicates that the members of this community have a higher degree of preference for products of specific brands, and as a result, they will spend more time and more money on the study of specific products and consumption behavior. Therefore, the study investigated the impact of online brand communities on customer citizenship behavior as one of the targets for discussion and will then discuss the effects of online brand communities on customer loyalty, with customer citizenship behavior as an intervening variable.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Online Brand Community

There are two forms of online brand community: one is established by customers to provide a network platform for customers who have the same brand preferences, allowing them to communicate with one another other. The other is established by companies based on brand concepts to initiate customer relationships and gain valuable feedback from customers [9]. In this study, we will define brand official community as a platform for customers to exchange knowledge and develop brand preferences, and for members to browse and share information, engage in free discussions, express their unique opinions, and share user experiences.

Previous research once pointed to informational quality, system quality, service quality, interaction, and knowledge-sharing mechanisms as the indicators by which to measure an online brand community. Based on past literature, this paper has concluded that the three main characteristics of an online brand community are as follows.

2.1.1. Service Quality

When [10] developed web quality based on the opinions of users, they defined it as a tool for users to evaluate the characteristics of websites. Web quality meets the requirements of users and reflects the advantages of the entire website.

2.1.2. Relationship Quality

The research on relationship quality reports that the customer loyalty is an important influence factor. Companies are capitalizing on strength companies and customers' relationship to gain invaluable information and how best to serve customers and suppliers and keep them from defecting to competing companies [11]. To build stable customer relationships, marketers in business design activities to attract, maintain and even to build up one's network to expand new customers, and enhance customer relationships. Moreover, relational quality has been conceptualized as a structure composed of multiple factors. These factors include satisfaction, trust, commitment, and overall quality, among others [12].

2.1.3. Informational Quality

[13] pointed out that online brand communities often dispense quick responses to the problems of members and maintain a smooth informational channel, providing related information on tasks. This can help information

collectors to quickly obtain opinions and comments about brands and reduce the uncertainty of information.

Traveler reviews are relative materiality when booking hotel rooms, as traveler communities provide unbiased representations into what it's like to stay at a hotel. Therefore, in this research, the author investigated the Booking.com travel community, since Booking.com is the most famous international travel platform in Taiwan, and it has an official travel community (Booking.com travel community), with an active review system built in. For this reason, customers don't have to scour the Internet searching for other reviews.

According to the review of the extant literature delineated above, online brand communities not only provide information on brands and commodities (informational quality), but also serve as a communications tool for brands and customers, or exclusively among customers (relationship quality). Consumers also participate in the brand community to directly experience the service (service quality). These three characteristics will be considered important indices by which to measure online brand communities.

2.2. Customer Citizenship Experiences

The idea of customer citizenship behavior is derived from the organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) theory [14]. In this research, the author reviewed the evidence in the service management literature, which shows that consumers can be considered and managed as partial employees of firms. A literature survey focusing on the intersection between service management and customer citizenship experiences would explore how service management practices influence customer behaviors that go beyond mere transactions, such as advocacy, loyalty, and engagement. [15] propose a service-dominant logic for marketing, emphasizing the role of service innovation and customer engagement in co-creating value and fostering positive customer citizenship behaviors. [16] also discusses how service quality, customer satisfaction, and relationship marketing strategies can foster positive customer citizenship behaviors. This article [17] explores the concept of co-creation, where customers actively participate in the service delivery process, leading to enhanced customer citizenship experiences.

Fundamentally, many organizational behavior theories can be extended to customer citizenship. In this study, the author is basing the conceptualization of customer citizenship experience (CZX) on the organizational citizenship behavior literature, thus establishing fundamental and theoretical connections existing theory. Customer citizenship behavior (CCB) exclusively encompasses customer behavior and is conceptually distinct from customer coproduction, although we expect the other constructs to be statistically relevant. [18] devised the proposed construct for CCB. A scale of CCB was developed, and the results demonstrated that CCB and customer coproduction have differential sets of predictors. He pointed out 3 dimensions of CCB: first of all, providing feedback to businesses and brands [19,20]; (2) helping other customers and; (3) making recommendations [21,22].

[23]'s study suggests that CCB research goes beyond the service context, because substantial fraction of CCB

research does refer to product markets, especially in retailing. This result seems to align with the differences in the literature between customer participation experience and CCB. Furthermore, Customers' perception of an interaction with people whom they have strong social ties, such as friends and family [24].

Moreover, Customer citizenship experiences encompass additional behaviors beyond regular expectations and involve various interactions with the brand. These experiences encompass actions such as providing feedback to the firm (Feedback), advocating for the brand to others, assisting fellow customers (advocacy), and demonstrating patience in instances of service failure (tolerance).

In efforts to control the COVID-19 pandemic, travel restrictions, border control measures, and quarantines were put into place, which have greatly affected the behavior of travel decisions and consumption [25,26]. Currently, most customers always browse online information before traveling, dining, and shopping. By establishing an online brand community, which serves as an official brand platform to provide product details and feedback sharing, also develop innovative brand services, companies can provide a better brand awareness and a stronger impression of their brands to customers, thereby strengthening the trusting level of the customer citizenship experience. Therefore, this research proposes the hypotheses below:

H1: The (a) service quality, (b) relationship quality, and (c) informational quality of an online brand community have a positive influence on customer citizenship experience.

2.3. Customer Loyalty

[27] were the first to propose the complete concept of customer loyalty. [28] also pointed out that customers repeatedly select a specific brand and have a positive attitude toward the brand, factors which indicate a commitment to the brand and the will to continue to purchase it. This is referred to as customer loyalty. Customer loyalty also includes customer contributions to a positive reputation and recommendations to others. [29] mentioned that customer citizenship behavior increases customers' sense of value affiliation and usefulness by enhancing customer perceptions, stimulate customers' active repurchase intentions, and strengthening loyalty [30]. Therefore, according to the literature identified above, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

H2: Customer citizenship experience has a positive influence on customer loyalty.

Additionally, an online brand community can help to uncover customer demands, as well as customer loyalty [31]. [32] found that when community members have more positive impressions of the product, the brand, the company, and other customers in the community, they are more willing to maintain sustainable relationships with the brands. [33] revealed that an online brand community is established by an enterprise based on its brand to establish relationships with customers and obtain valuable feedback from them. Therefore, the authors suggest that given the more holistic brand information in the official brand community, the closer relationships between members, and the satisfied service experience, customers will exhibit

greater loyalty to a brand. Therefore, the authors propose the hypotheses as follow:

H3: The (a) service quality, (b) relationship quality, and (c) informational quality of an online brand community has a positive influence on customer loyalty.

From the perspective of customers, a specific brand activity requires a better degree of brand engagement to trigger subsequent purchase behaviors [34]. Therefore, customer citizenship experience can have an effect on both online brand community and customer loyalty and can also have a positive mediating effect between them. When customers have a high degree of customer citizenship experience, they will try to obtain more knowledge about a brand through an online brand community and select brand-name products with that knowledge context, which adds to the certainty of purchases and lowers the risk [35,36]. Coupled with the effects of customer citizenship experience, customer loyalty will have longer and more stable benefits [37]. Consequently, we can conclude that brand involvement has a mediating effect between online brand community and customer loyalty. Therefore, the author proposes the hypothesis below:

H4: Customer citizenship experience has a mediating effect between online brand community and customer loyalty.

3. Methodology

3.1. Sampling

The data utilized for hypothesis testing were gathered from members of online brand communities in Taiwan, primarily on platforms such as Facebook. As the focus of this study was on individuals within online brand communities, the questionnaire was distributed through social media channels and questionnaire collection website (Facebook, surveycake.com). Participants were requested to consider their membership and engagement in a specific online brand community (Booking.com) while responding to the survey questions. To ensure a high response rate and minimize survey bias, self-administered questionnaires were utilized along with a cover letter aiding. At the conclusion of the data collection period, a total of 229 questionnaires were collected, with seven of them having missing values. Consequently, 222 questionnaires that were fully completed were utilized for the data analysis.

3.2. Data Analysis

In this study, the Partial Least Squares approach was chosen over other Structural Equation Modeling methods. This decision was based on the fact that PLS imposes fewer constraints on sample size and residual distribution, as supported by previous research [38]. In addition, this study employed regression analysis using SPSS to examine the mediating variables. Specifically, it investigated whether an online brand community affects customer citizenship experience, whether the constructs of online brand community significantly influence customer loyalty, and whether both the online brand community and

customer citizenship experience have a significant impact on customer loyalty.

4. Results

4.1. Demographic Profile of Respondents

Among the 222 respondents, 68.5% were male, while 31.5% were female. In terms of age distribution, 52.3% fell within the 25-34 age group, and 41.9% were aged between 15 and 24. These two groups accounted for the largest portion of the sample, followed by those aged 35-54 years (3.6%) and those aged 55 and above (1.4%). Regarding access frequency, almost half of the respondents (49.6%) accessed their favorite online brand community at least once every day; 35.6% at least once a week; and 14.9% less than once a week.

4.2. Measurement Model

In this study, the reliability of dimensions will be

assessed using the standard criterion proposed by [39], which requires that the Cronbach's alpha value exceeds 0.65. If it is lower than this value, it is necessary to modify the questionnaire or add/increase the number of questions. In terms of validity analysis, content validity in this study follows the recommendation of [40] for factor loading, where 0.5 is considered the standard threshold. For construct validity, the study adopts the suggestions of [41] for factor loading and average variance extracted (AVE), with a threshold of 0.5. Composite reliability (CR) is assessed using the standard of 0.7, as suggested by [42]. The details are listed in Table 1, which shows the measuring items for each dimension.

Discriminant validity adheres to the standard that the value of each dimension AVE radical sign is greater than the correlation coefficients of other dimensions, and the correlation coefficient of each dimension must be smaller than 0.85, a standard proposed by [41] and [43]. This is measured to determine that the dimensions of this study have strong discriminant validity in Table 2 shown below.

Table 1. Constructs and their measurement items

Construct	Measurement items	Loading	α	CR	AVE
Service Quality (SQ)	I am pleased that this online brand community can share services solution that provides by official customer service.	0.904	0.72	0.87	0.78
	The interaction and online comments provided by the members can help other customer solve their problems.	0.860			
Relationship Quality (RQ)	I value the maintenance of relationship with members of online brand community.	0.824	0.69	0.83	0.62
	I think the information exchange of this online brand community is very frequent.	0.786			
	I think I can find the net friends who share the same interest with me from this community.	0.749			
Information Quality (IQ)	I think the information provided by online brand community is correct.	0.706	0.80	0.86	0.55
	The information arrangement of this online brand community pleases me.	0.700			
	The online brand community can provide the information I require.	0.731			
	I am pleased with the online brand community as a whole.	0.776			
Customer Citizenship Experience (CZX)	I think online brand community is trustful.	0.804	0.82	0.86	0.56
	For similar products, I am very frequent to select or recommend this brand.	0.719			
	With the Citizenship Experience of a brand, it makes me think it is better than other brands.	0.719			
	When I read related articles from the Internet, I will show interest to the articles and willing to leave feedback or comments about this brand.	0.746			
	I think the commitment of this brand is significant to me.	0.706			
Customer Loyalty (CL)	I often pay attention to the advertisements or articles about this brand.	0.785	0.83	0.88	0.65
	I am loyal to this brand because I know it fits me the best.	0.750			
	When I purchase related products, I will choose this brand rather than considering other brands.	0.836			
	When this brand has no product for consideration, I will not choose other brands.	0.793			
	When I want to purchase related products again, I will stick to this brand.	0.834			

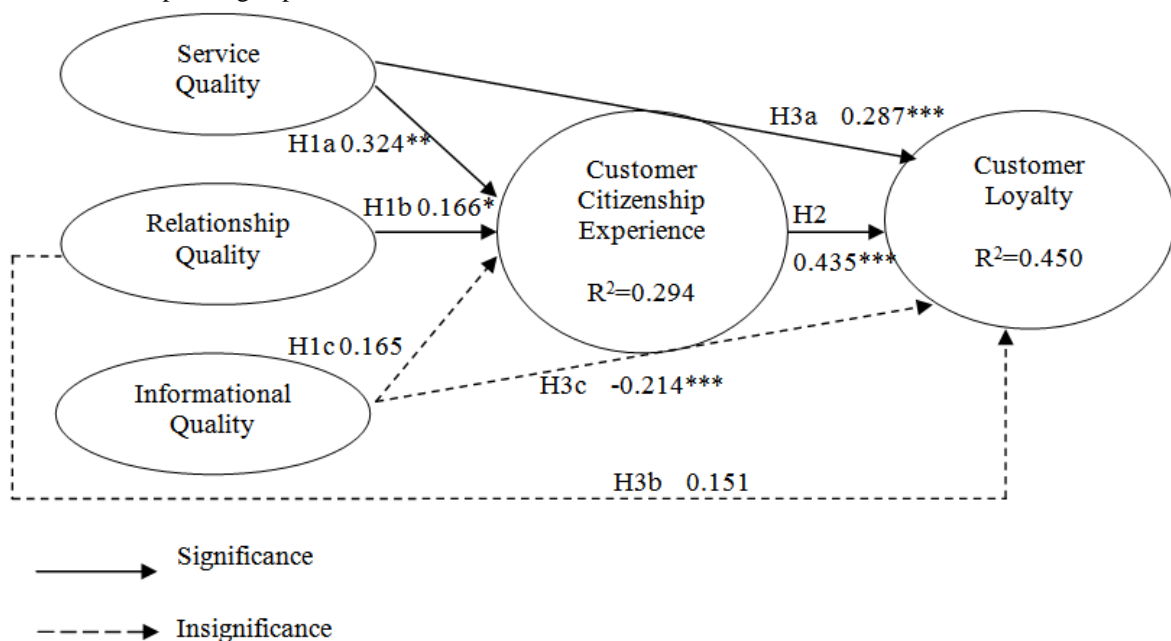
Table 2. Correlation Matrix

	AVE	IQ	RQ	SQ	CZX	CL
IQ	0.55	0.741				
RQ	0.62	0.563	0.781			
SQ	0.78	0.457	0.431	0.877		
CZX	0.56	0.502	0.446	0.392	0.748	
CL	0.65	0.443	0.401	0.134	0.516	0.804

Note: Diagonals represent the square root of the average variance extracted while the other entries represent the correlations

4.3. Structural Model

The degree of explanatory power in the structural model is assessed by examining the R² values. As illustrated in Figure 1, the R² values spanned from 0.294 to 0.450, indicating that the modeled variables can account for approximately 29.4% to 45.0% of the variances observed in the corresponding dependent variables.



Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

Figure 1. Results of the Structural Model Analysis

4.4. Analysis of Mediating Effect

According to the research conclusion from [44], we test the mediating effect of customer citizenship experience using a three-stage regression model. First, we examine the relationship (β_{11}) between the independent variable and the mediating variable (online brand community and customer citizenship experience); second, we examine the relationship (β_{21}) between the independent variable (online brand community) and the corresponding variable (customer loyalty), and; third, we examine the relationship (β_{31}) between the independent variable (online brand community) and the corresponding variable (customer loyalty) and the relationship (β_{32}) between the mediating variable (customer citizenship experience) and the corresponding variable (customer loyalty).

According to Figure 1, the relationships between service quality, relationship quality, and informational quality in an online brand community were examined. Notably, the connection between informational quality and customer citizenship experience was found to be non-significant. Therefore, we conclude that H1a and H1b are supported. Because customer citizenship experience has a very significant influence on customer loyalty, we can also conclude that H2 is supported. In addition, based on our analysis, we find that (1) the service quality of an online brand community has a significant effect on customer loyalty, indicating that improved online service quality may also enhance customer loyalty; (2) relationship quality has no significant effect on customer loyalty, and (3) informational quality has a significant effect on customer loyalty, but the path value is negative. Therefore, we can conclude that H3a in this study is valid, while H3b and H3c are invalid.

Stage 1 ($\beta_{11}=0.529$, $p < 0.001$): This indicates that an online brand community has a significant influence on customer citizenship experience. Therefore, the result supports the second stage.

Stage 2 ($\beta_{21}=0.407$, $p < 0.001$): This indicates that an online brand community has a significant influence on customer loyalty. Therefore, the result supports the third stage.

Stage 3 ($\beta_{31}=0.220$, $p < 0.05$; $\beta_{32}=0.588$, $p < 0.001$): This indicates that an online brand community has a significant influence on customer loyalty, and customer citizenship experience has a significant influence on customer loyalty. Therefore, customer citizenship experience has a partial mediating effect on an online brand community and customer loyalty, supporting H4. Table 3 below presents the test results:

Table 3. Results of Testing

Hypothesized relationship	Coefficient	T-value	Supported
H1a SQ → CZX	0.324**	2.544	Yes
H1b RQ → CZX	0.166*	2.064	Yes
H1c IQ → CZX	0.165	1.920	No
H2 CZX → CL	0.435***	3.614	Yes
H3a SQ → CL	0.287***	2.753	Yes
H3b RQ → CL	0.151	1.835	No
H3c IQ → CL	-0.214	2.801	No
H4 CZX has mediating effect between online community quality and Customer loyalty			Yes

Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

SQ=Service Quality

RQ=Relationship Quality

IQ=Informational Quality

CZX=Customer Citizenship Experience

CL=Customer Loyalty

5. Discussion and Conclusions

The result contributes to research on the relationships of online brand community and customer loyalty and raise up an issue of the importance of customer citizenship experience. The research findings also concluded to research on the link between online brand community and marketing strategy, and research on service and relationship quality for corporate sustainability. This study is dedicated to a discussion of whether the informational, relationship, and service quality provided by an online brand community can improve customer citizenship experience and thereby boost customer loyalty. The study found that the service quality of an online brand community has a direct influence on customer loyalty. Additionally, customer citizenship experience was identified as a mediating factor between relationship quality characteristics and customer loyalty.

The findings from this study and in the case of the Booking.com travel community is that customer citizenship experience can enhance the customer loyalty, especially with good service qualities. In practice, the findings provide retailers in the leisure industry with the strategies they need, ensure customer online engagement with citizenship behaviors, and help other online travel platforms improve their overall customer experiences.

First, the study found that the features of an online brand community partially influence customer citizenship experience, especially service and relational quality, which had a positive significant influence.

Second, the results reveal that the attribute of an online brand community and customer loyalty do not have a completely significant association, in that relationship and information quality have no significant influence on customer loyalty. This indicates that online brand community followers only care if the service provided by the brand community is smooth and thoughtful.

Thirdly, customer citizenship experience was found to have a complete mediating effect on the relationship between the quality of an online brand community and customer loyalty. As a result, brand community managers should focus not only on fostering relationships with members and sharing brand-related information (such as brand stories or knowledge) but also on organizing experiential marketing events. This approach will help

enhance customer loyalty by positively influencing customer citizenship experience.

The limitations of this study must be mentioned. First, questionnaires for this study were distributed through an online brand community or platform, so the sample is primarily comprised of young members (20-30 years of age). Second, there is a large variety of online brand communities, and the study only focus on the Booking.com Travel Communities. It is suggested that future studies might focus on some specific brand for demonstration purposes. Finally, this study adopted informational quality, relationship quality, and service quality as the characteristics of an online brand community. Other characteristics – such as system quality, interaction, and knowledge-sharing mechanisms – should also be considered and examined in future studies.

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