Antecedents of Store Loyalty Among Chinese Customers

Yun Chu[a], Arturo Z. Vasquez-Parraga[b], Jianyu Ma[c]

[a] School of Business, Robert Morris University, PA, USA
chu@rmu.edu
[b] Robert C. Vackar College of Business & Entrepreneurship
University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, Texas, USA
arturo.vasquez@utrgv.edu
[c] School of Business, Robert Morris University, PA, USA
ma@rmu.edu

ABSTRACT

This study explores the mediated impact of customer satisfaction on customer store loyalty among Chinese consumers. The relationship is mediated by two relational factors, trust and commitment. Measurements developed for satisfaction, trust, commitment, and loyalty in a Western context (U.S. sample) are tested in an Eastern context (Chinese sample). The results reveal all measures having internal and external validity, and all relationships being significant. The findings demonstrate that the mediated relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty is robust compared to the direct relationship between satisfaction and loyalty among Chinese consumers. The theoretical and practical implications of the research are discussed.

I.   INTRODUCTION

For a company to ensure growth and profitability, the most effective way is to turn its existing customers into champions (Alessandra, 2001) as "only by seeing the world through its customers' eyes can the company build lasting and profitable customer relationships" (Kotler and Armstrong, 2018, p. 602). Companies can build lasting and profitable customer relationships by going beyond making customers satisfied with the products; by fostering customer trust and commitment to the products, and finally assuring customer loyalty. Companies must move away from transactional customer satisfaction and toward customer loyalty (Kotler and Armstrong, 2018). Such a practice rests on a mediated impact of satisfaction on loyalty; it is mediated by relational constructs, trust and commitment (Day, 1969; Morgan and Hunt, 1994).

To understand business practices, particularly customer loyalty, in China, "firms wish to compare study results between Western and Chinese contexts" (Wiley, Wilkinson, and Young, 2005, p. 58). The above constructs (satisfaction, trust, commitment and loyalty) were developed in a Western context, and their relationships tested drawing on Western consumers, but can be applied to a non-western context such as China. Thus, the purpose of this study is twofold 1) to replicate the measures of satisfaction, trust, commitment, and loyalty, and 2) to test the relationships among satisfaction, trust, commitment, and loyalty, tapping Chinese consumers.

The rest of this study is organized as follows. Section II provides literature review on satisfaction, trust, commitment, and loyalty (STCL), and develops hypotheses. Section III describes methodology to be used in this study. Section IV tests the STCL instruments generated from Western literature (imported constructs) among Chinese customers and explains the results. The final section presents conclusions and implications for practitioners and academia.

II.   LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

Customer store loyalty relates to customer's commitment to a store or a supplier, based on a strong favorable attitude and manifested in consistent repeat purchase (Sheth, Mittal, and Newman, 1999). Customer loyalty in the business literature involves: (1) frequently purchased package goods and brand loyalty (Torres, Vasquez-Parraga and Zamora, 2008), (2) services in various areas or service loyalty (e.g., Torres, Vasquez-Parraga and Barra, 2009), (3) goods consumption like consumption of fast foods (e.g., Sahagun and Vasquez-Parraga, 2014), (4) tourist-related products such as transportation, restaurants and hotels (e.g., Zamora, Vasquez-Parraga, Rodriguez, and Gonzalez, 2011; Zamora, Vasquez-Parraga, Diaz, and Grandon, 2011; Zamora, Vasquez-Parraga, Morales, and Cisternas, 2004; Bravo, Vasquez-Parraga, and Zamora, 2005); (5) not-for-profit relationships (e.g., Torres, Vasquez-Parraga, and Barra, 2010), and (6) retail establishments or store loyalty (Dick and Basu, 1994; Vasquez-Parraga, Sahagun and Escobedo, 2014; Vasquez-Parraga and Sahagun, 2014). The focus of this research is store loyalty to retail establishments.

Loyal customers have been found to spend double the amount in their "first choice" store although they have smaller monthly budgets than switchers (Knox and Denison, 2000). "A crucial issue in the research of global evaluations is to identify which evaluative construct is the most predictive of future intentions of consumers" (Garbarino

and Johnson, 1999, p. 72). Customer loyalty represents an important basis for developing a sustainable competitive advantage that can be realized through marketing efforts. "A consumer loyalty to a brand (store or service), or a committed customer, has an emotional attachment to the brand or firm [store]" (Hawkins, Best, Coney, and Koch, 2004, p. 646).

Satisfaction is defined as pleasurable fulfillment (Oliver, 1999). Satisfaction has a strong effect on the decision to repurchase from a vendor and to expand the buyer-seller relationship. Satisfaction relates to both consumption and transaction. In fact, satisfaction that results from the interaction with a firm's representatives is likely to be more important than satisfaction with the products (Ganesh, Arnold, and Reynolds, 2000). Satisfaction with a store in China will include satisfaction of customers in their interactions with store employees. Thus, satisfaction with store employees should be considered as an attitudinal construct that reflects the positive impact of store service in long-term relationships between the store and its customers.

Overall satisfaction has an important effect on customer service loyalty (Menon, Homburg, and Giering, 1999). Yet, satisfaction per se might not automatically lead to customer loyalty. In fact, satisfaction was often found to be an antecedent of trust (Vasquez-Parraga and Alonso, 2000; Vasquez-Parraga, Sahagun and Escobedo, 2014). Thus, to better study customer store loyalty, research must examine its antecedents beyond customer satisfaction. This research focuses on two relational antecedents, trust, and commitment ((Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Vasquez-Parraga and Alonso, 2000; Vasquez-Parraga, Sahagun and Escobedo, 2014).

Trust and Commitment are central to successful relationship marketing. Research results show that trust and commitment are key variables mediating successful relationship marketing in the tire dealer industry (Morgan and Hunt, 1994), in long-distance telephone service (Alonso, 2000), and with online CD selling (Kabadayi and Gupta, 2003). Empirical findings show that trust and commitment led directly to cooperative behaviors that are conducive to relationship marketing success (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). This inclusion of relational factors is particularly important when studying customer loyalty in other contexts. For instance, to study customer store loyalty among Chinese customers, additional factors need to be considered. The Chinese culture is characterized by collectivistic orientation, relationship orientation, and authoritarian orientation (Cheung et al., 2001). Relationships are very important in Chinese society.

Trust is a crucial factor contributing to relationship development. Trust exists when one party has confidence in an exchange partner's reliability and integrity and is regarded as central to relational exchange (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). The salesperson is a key factor in trust development in business-to-business marketing (Swan, Bowers, and Richardson, 1999). Thus, the more reliable and accountable the stores are, the more trust customers may develop.

Therefore, we hypothesize that

H1: The more satisfaction the store customer will obtain in a relationship, the more trust the customer will exercise towards the store.

Relationship commitment results from customer exercising trust. Trust is an antecedent of commitment (Vasquez and Alonso, 2000; Vasquez, Sahagun and Escobedo, 2014). We hypothesize that
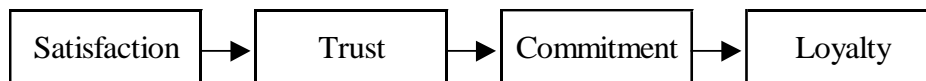
H2: The more trust customers will develop toward a store, the higher the relationship commitment they will achieve towards the store.

Commitment is an antecedent of customer store loyalty (Vasquez-Parraga, Sahagun and Escobedo, 2014). Commitment is found to boost relationship performance cross-culturally (Skarmeas, Katsikeas, and Schlegelmilch, 2002). Research demonstrates that commitment is positively related to enforcement mechanism employed to maintain channel arrangements (Gilliland and Bello, 2002). Commitment is also found to reduce turnover intention in organizations and to lead good relationships (Brashear, Boles, and Bellenger, 2003). In general, the more identified with/belonging to/caring of the stores customers are, the more loyal customers to the stores they may become. Thus, a final hypothesis is formulated:

H3: The higher the relationship commitment customers will attain, the more store loyalty customers will realize

The chain linkage among satisfaction, trust, commitment, and store loyalty has been studied and tested using U.S. samples (Vasquez-Parraga, Sahagun and Escobedo, 2014; Vasquez-Parraga and Sahagun, 2014), as it is summarized in the following conceptual model originally presented in Vasquez-Parraga and Alonso (2000) (Figure 1).

Figure 1
Conceptual model

| Satisfaction | → | Trust | → | Commitment | → | Loyalty |

III.   METHODOLOGY

A.   Measures

For store loyalty construct, this study mainly focuses on a loyalty measurement consisting of five items. Three items were used from Lichtenstein and Netemeyer (1990), one from Garbarino and Johnson (1999), and one from Sirgy and Johar (1991). For relationship commitment, three questions were adopted from Garbarino and Johnson's (1999) questions. Two additional questions were adopted from Alonso (2000). For trust, there were four questions adopted from Garbarino and Johnson (1999). Two additional items were adopted from Bruner II, James, and Hensel (2001) and one from Alonso (2000). For satisfaction, four questions were adopted for the satisfaction with consumption constructs from Westbrook and Oliver (1981), four questions adopted from Carman (1990) concerning the construct of satisfaction with the transaction, and three questions came from Alonso (2000) and one from Westbrook and Oliver (1981) for the construct of satisfaction in competition.

The survey collected cross-sectional data by asking sample customers to respond to each question utilizing a five-point Likert-scale (descriptive anchors are "strongly agree", "agree", "uncertain", "disagree", and "strongly disagree").

B.   Translation Procedure

The questionnaire was developed in English. Then, three translations were employed during instrument development: simple direct translation, modified direct translation, and translation/back translation procedures (Beling and Law, 2000). Back translations were employed with two professional translators and two individuals from China.

Given the low response rates of mail surveys in China, a non-random sample was employed in China. The non-random sample approach has been used in other cases (Croll, 1987; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Chu, 1999; Chu, Vásquez-Parraga, and Ma, 2002; Polsa, 2002) and has been labeled criterion type sampling or judgmental sampling, where cases are chosen based on a certain criterion or judgment (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Polsa, 2002).

A middle-sized city (with 9.57 million urbanized population) located at the center of China, Zhengzhou, has been chosen as the data source for the study. Zhengzhou has been named China's Commercial Capital since ancient China for its easy access and central location to all directions in China by all kinds of transportation. For the benefit of this study, "commercial and retail stores have been fiercely competing there in the past two decades. An old saying states that you cannot conquer China until you conquer the center part of China first (*de zhong yuan zhe de tian xia*). Zhengzhou is highly recognized for its strategic position in relation to wars as well as in relation to business in China" (Chu *et al*., 2002, p. 5).

In addition, Zhengzhou offers a critical case sampling (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Polsa, 2002). As pointed out in the literature, a critical case sampling allows for logical generalization and for maximum application of information to other cases. Zhengzhou represents a middle-sized city located in Henan Province that is the native place of Chinese nation, the birthplace of Chinese culture and the root of Chinese family names for 105 of the family names listed in Baijiaxing (Hundred Chinese Family Names). Famous names like The Kejia Family, Minnan Family, and Heluo Family, have their roots in Henan (Song, 1997).

This sample, therefore, can be considered as a good representation of the total population of customers in China even when it was not randomly drawn. Additionally, choosing Zhengzhou as the empirical setting for this study might contribute some insights of Chinese people' behavior and Chinese culture for other future studies for the Kejia Family, Minnan Family, and Heluo Family all over the world.

C.   Data

Several interviewers were hired to ask Chinese customers to fill out the questionnaire in such places as companies, bus stations, streets, retail stores, schools and hospitals. To effectively test the hypotheses, respondents came from different age groups such as young customers, middle-age customers, and old customers. To collect information from a diverse set of people, factors such as age group, gender, education, and occupation were also considered. The main advantage of this data gathering approach is that it should help

assure that respondents are representative of the total population and therefore contribute to the external validity of the study (Cook and Campbell, 1979; Calder, Phillips, and Tybout, 1982; Reynolds, Simintiras, and Diamantopoulos, 2003). A total of 216 Chinese customers were approached and 212 respondents answered the questionnaire. Since the data were hand-delivered and collected by the interviewers in person, the non-response bias is not a significant problem in the study.

The demographic characteristics of the respondents are summarized. Their mean age is 32.2 years and their ages range from 19 years to 56 years old. Forty-four percent of the participants are 21 to 30 years old; 44 % are 31 to 40 years old; 9 % are 41 to 50 years old; and 3 % are 15 to 20 years old. Two-thirds (67%) are male and one third female. Seventy-one percent are married, 27 %, single, and 2 %, widowed. Thirty-five percent have only high school or less education, 60 % have one to four years of college education, and 2 % achieved a Master or Ph.D. Degree. Their occupations vary from workers (60.4%) and teachers (2.8%), to employees (30.7%), businesspeople (1.4%), and unemployed (1.9%).

Given that the missing values are missing completely at random, the mean substitution method was used. Factor analysis used list wise deletion for missing values and correlations excluded cases pairwise (Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson, 2010). All missing values were random and did not pose any serious problem for the analysis.

D.   Measure Reliability and Validity

All items in the questionnaire used the same metric and no item needed to be reverse-scaled in the study. The response scale for all items is 1=strongly agree to 5=strongly disagree. To determine the degree of internal consistency, the split-half method was used to check one half of the results of a set of scaled items against the other half (Zikmund, 2003) because it is possible to achieve a measure of reliability by various split-half procedures if the equivalence of the two halves is attained (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994; Thorndike, 1997).

Different item splits, however, may produce dramatically different results. To even out the possible effects of an inappropriate split, a trendy way is to use the coefficient alpha (Cronbach's alpha). It is the average of all possible split-half coefficients resulting from several ways of splitting the items (Thorndike, 1997; Brown, Suter, and Churchill, 2018). An adequate and basic procedure for most purposes is to find the scores on the odd and even items of the test, which provides a measure of the accuracy, a split-half reliability (Thorndike, 1997; Zikmund, 2003). We conducted two-item splits to double confirm the internal consistency at this stage. The coefficient alpha (Cronbach's alpha) for both approaches is all above 0.87, an acceptable range for either exploratory or confirmatory study (Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson, 2010). Hence, the measures of this study can be considered as yielding consistent results if the measurements are used repeatedly.

Additionally, a series of diagnostic measures to assess internal consistency were employed: The item-to-total correlation, the reliability coefficient, and confirmatory factor analysis (Zikmund, 2003). The item-to-total correlations should exceed .50 and that the inter-item correlations should exceed .30 (Bartz, 1999). In this study, the item-to-total correlation ranged from 0.53 to 0.85 significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed), which

meet the strength of a correlation by such adjectives as moderate correlation to strong correlation (Bartz, 1999).

The Cronbach's alpha of core variables ranged from 0.73 to 0.88 by using maximum likelihood method. The rotation method used is Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. The eigenvalues ranged from 8.68 to 1.05, and the cases with missing values were excluded list wise. In sum, the Cronbach's alpha of the construct meets the requirement to show internal consistency of the entire scale.

The content/face validity and construct/discriminant validity assessments were used in this study. Content validity is also known as face validity which is the subjective assessment of the correspondence between the individual items and the concept through ratings by expert judges, pretests with multiple subpopulations, or other means (Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson, 2010). By consulting focus group and pretest, both content and face validity were guaranteed.

Construct validity includes convergent, discriminant, and nomological validity. Discriminant validity is the ability of a measure to have a low correlation with measures of dissimilar concepts (Gerbing and Anderson, 1988; Zikmund, 2003). By examining correlations among all the variables, the discriminant validity was confirmed (Dabholkar and Bagozzi, 2002). This study examines discriminant validity with correlation analysis.

Overall, two methods were employed to examine reliability and internal consistency reliability, split-half and item-to-total. As to validity, content/face validity was examined by consulting a focus group. For construct validity, discriminant validity was examined by using correlation analysis.

E.   Methods of Analysis

SPSS and AMOS were used to analyze the data for the study. Statistical techniques employed in this study were factor analysis, correlation analysis, regression analysis, and structural equation modeling (SEM).

First, factor analysis was used as it provides evidence about content validity and construct validity. It helps in selecting instruments to be tried as predictors that will work well in practice; it serves as data reduction and summarization, which derives underlying dimensions (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994; Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson, 2010). Second, correlation analysis was employed because its function of (1) determining how precise and consistent a measurement procedure is; (2) describing the relationship between variables; (3) understanding what the pattern of customer purchasing behavior is; and (4) being important in regression analysis (Thorndike, 1997; Bartz, 1999; Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson, 2010).

Correlation analysis can only reveal the direction and strength of the relationship and association between variables. It does not predict any relationship, although the correlation coefficient (r) is fundamental to regression analysis. Regression analysis can estimate and/or predict the value of one variable (DV) selected by the researcher based on the known or fixed values of other variables (IVs) (Sheskin, 1997; Gujarati, 2003). Therefore, regression analysis was employed in this research to test hypotheses (Greene, 2003).

Structural equation model was also used in this study since the sample size (n=212) is large enough for SEM analysis (Kline, 1998), as Hair *et al.* (2010, p. 605) recommend that "always to test a model with a sample size of 200, no matter what the original sample

size was, because 200 is proposed as being the critical sample size." In addition, "SEM allows the explicit representation of a distinction between observed and latent variables, which makes it possible for researchers to test a wide variety of hypotheses" (Kline, 1998, p. 8). AGFI, GFI, CFI, Adj-Chi, and p-values are used to assess model fit and adequacy.

Overall, the reliability and validity of the instrument were assessed; the traditional statistical techniques were used, and finally structural equation modeling was also employed to test the hypotheses in this research.

IV.   RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

A.   Factor Analysis

Six factors came out after factor analysis with loadings ranging from .42 to .76. One of the items for trust was eliminated because it cross-loaded. Loyalty have one item loaded outside its factor; commitment have two items loaded outside its factor. All six factors have Cronbach's alphas greater than .70, and thus meet the threshold for confirmatory factor analysis (Hair *et al*., 2010). All factors have more than three items, denoting good representation of the underlying dimensions (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994; Hair *et al*., 2010). The twelve items measuring satisfaction load into the three expected dimensions with Cronbach's alphas from .73 to .83. See Table 1 for detailed information on the loadings and Cronbach's alphas for all variables.

B.   Correlation Analysis

The retained items of variables from factor analysis are developed into summated scores. The summated scores are carried on to correlation analysis to identify the relations among related hypothesized constructs. Green, Salkind, and Akey (2000) suggest checking the descriptive statistics and to confirm that the data have no major anomalies. First, the descriptive statistics shows that the data had no major anomalies. All the means ranged from 1.79 to 3.17 within the range of possible values (1 to 5), and all the standard deviations ranged from .45 to .82. Second, all the correlations among the variables are positive for there are no reversed scales in the questionnaire.

All the correlation coefficients of the model are statistically significant (at .01 level). Overall, the relationships among the constructs of the model are all supported Table 2 shows the results of correlation analysis.

C.   Regression Analysis

Both simple regression and multiple regression were conducted by using loyalty as the dependent variable in the model. The explanation chain is satisfaction, trust, and commitment. Given the theory-driven nature of the proposed model, the "enter" selection is used to identify the differences on the independent variable(s) in this study.

Literature has shown the importance of satisfaction, trust, and commitment in explaining store customer loyalty. Satisfaction is closely related to performance (Arino, 2003) and repurchase, trust plays an important role among business partners and will generate greater profits, and commitment leads to good relationships (Brashear *et al*., 2003). Furthermore, the conceptual framework from Vasquez-Parraga and Alonso (2000) shows the direct chain relationships among satisfaction, trust, commitment, and loyalty.

Table 1
Factor analysis: loading and Cronbach's alpha of the imported (core) variables

Construct	Item	Loading	Cronbach's alpha
Loyalty	LOYALTY1	0.61	0.75
	LOYALTY2	0.65	
	LOYALTY3	0.71	
	LOYALTY4	0.44	
Commitment	CMITMNT6	0.58	0.79
	CMITMNT7	0.64	
	CMITMN10	0.62	
Trust	TRUST14	0.51	0.73
	TRUST15	0.43	
	TRUST16	0.68	
	TRUST17	0.72	
Satisfaction Competition	STCNSM55	0.44	0.83
	STSCMP63	0.69	
	STSCMP64	0.68	
	STSCMP65	0.71	
	STSCMP66	0.49	
Satisfaction Consumption	STCNSM56	0.50	0.78
	STCNSM57	0.69	
	STCNSM58	0.76	
	STSTRN59	0.49	
Satisfaction Transaction	STSTRN60	0.53	0.73
	STSTRN61	0.42	
	STSTRN62	0.58	

Extraction Method: Maximum Likelihood.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

Table 2
Correlation coefficients (n = 212)

Variable	1	2	3	4
1. satisfaction	1			
2. trust	0.45[**]	1		
3. commitment	0.47[**]	0.34[**]	1	
4. loyalty	0.38[**]	0.31[**]	0.47[**]	1

[**]Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

This explanation chain postulates that satisfaction leads to trust, trust leads to commitment, and commitment leads to loyalty (S-T-C-L chain). This direct chain is empirically tested using samples of store customer in the United States (Vasquez-Parraga, Sahagun and Escobedo, 2014; Vasquez-Parraga and Sahagun, 2014). The results of research performed regarding customer store loyalty justify the explanation chain proposed by Vasquez-Parraga and Alonso (2000).

In addition, results of collinearity statistics of the model shows VIF values ranging from 1.29 to 1.46, which are far below the multicollinearity-indicating value of 10.0 (Neter, Wasserman, and Kutner, 1990); and tolerance values ranged from 0.68 to 0.78, which were all greater than 0 (Hair *et al*., 2010). Therefore, multicollinearity or collinearity among the independent variables do not cause problem for the regression analysis of the model.

The regression results of the model show that loyalty is satisfactorily explained by the explanation chain formed by commitment, trust, and satisfaction. Commitment (Std. Beta=.35, t=5.13, adjusted R^2=.252) is statistically significant at .000 level; trust (Std. Beta=.11, t=1.63, adjusted R^2=.252) is statistically significant at .105 level, and satisfaction (Std. Beta=.17, t=2.34, adjusted R^2=.252) is statistically significant at .020 level. Table 3 shows the results of hypotheses tests.

Table 3
Results of hypotheses tests

Path	Hypotheses	Results
Satisfaction → Trust	H 1: The more satisfaction the customers have, the more trust the customers have toward the store they are using.	Supported[**]
Trust → Commitment	H 2: The more trust the customers have toward the store they are using, the more commitment the customers will have toward the store.	Supported[**]
Commitment → Loyalty	H 3: The more commitment the customers have, the more loyalty the customers would have toward the store they are using.	Supported[**]

[**] p<.000

Furthermore, the results reveal the following. First, these results justify the empirical findings of relationship between commitment and loyalty (Hennig-Thurau, Langer, and Hansen, 2001; Fullerton, 2003; Hansen, Sandvik, and Selnes, 2003). Second, these results corroborate the empirical findings of the strong relationship between trust and commitment (Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Marshall, 2003). Third, the results justify the empirical finding that trust and satisfaction are strongly related (Nijssen, Holzmuller, Singh, and Sirdeshmukh, 1999). Finally, these independent variables have a joint impact on store loyalty, in the form of an explanation chain (Vasquez-Parraga, Sahagun and Escobedo, 2014; Vasquez-Parraga and Sahagun, 2014). This effect is greater than the separate effect of each variable on loyalty. Confirming the Vasquez-Parraga and

Alonso's (2000) approach, this study shows that satisfaction leads to trust, trust leads to commitment, and commitment leads to loyalty.

In sum, these results indicate that commitment, trust, and satisfaction are the joint predictors of loyalty as they were hypothesized in the model and tested in previous research (Vasquez-Parraga and Alonso, 2000; Vasquez-Parraga, Sahagun and Escobedo, 2014; Vasquez-Parraga and Sahagun, 2014). Overall, the model does hold in the Chinese context corroborating the empirical findings of Alonso (2000) and the Chinese factors did add explanation to the model by showing an improvement in the explanation of loyalty in a Chinese context.

V.   CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study explored the mediated impact of customer satisfaction on customer store loyalty among Chinese consumers. The relationship is mediated by two relational factors, trust and commitment. Measurements developed for satisfaction, trust, commitment, and loyalty in a Western context (U.S. sample) were tested in an Eastern context (Chinese sample). The study also reviews the literature from both Western and Eastern contexts to understand the way Chinese consumers develop and maintain loyalty. At the outset, first, the associations among satisfaction, trust, commitment, and loyalty are fully addressed. Second, the study tests the chain linkage among satisfaction, trust, commitment, and loyalty previously found in Western samples and now found in a Chinese sample of consumers. Third, a cross-sectional survey method is employed to detect the constructs of satisfaction, trust, commitment, and loyalty among Chinese customers. The empirical results show good reliability for the satisfaction, trust, commitment, and loyalty among Chinese consumers. Finally, it is suggested that future studies might collect data from more locations in China and see if these findings will hold. For practitioners, making customers satisfied is important not only because a dissatisfied customer will tell between 9-15 people about their experience and spread a negative word of mouth about a service (Peppers, Rogers, and Kotler, 2016), but also because it is the first step that will lead to customer trust and commitment, and eventually customer loyalty, the crown outcome of a successful relational experience.

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