



Relations among Relationship Marketing, Service Quality, Customer Satisfaction and Customer Loyalty - H Optician Company as an Example

Yi-Chan Chung^{1*}, Chen-Ho Chiu¹, Shu-Fang Lin¹

1 Graduate Institute of Business Administration Yuanpei University of Medical Technology No. 306,
Yuanpei Street, Hsin-Chu, Taiwan

This study examines the customers of opticians in order to explore the relationships among relationship marketing, service quality, customer satisfaction and loyalty. This paper conducts a survey from February to April, 2016 and collated a total of 251 valid questionnaires. The research findings suggest that the quality of services rendered has a significant and positive influence on customer satisfaction. The greater the relationship marketing, the higher the quality of services rendered. This implies that opticians company can improve customer satisfaction by stepping up relationship marketing and service quality, so as to achieve operational targets. Meanwhile, this study examines relationship marketing and satisfaction with service quality, in order to highlight the areas for improvement and provide a reference to industry players.

Keywords: Relationship marketing; Service quality; Customer satisfaction;
Customer loyalty

INTRODUCTION

The number of optician company has been on the increase in Taiwan, in response to the growing demand for eye-wears and consultation services on eye care. Given the emphasis on interaction with customers, it is essential for optician company to enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty by improving relationship marketing and service quality and hence competitiveness. This paper uses H optician company as a case study on the relationship among

relationship marketing, service quality, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. It also examines the intensity of relationship marketing and the level of satisfaction with service quality, as to identify the areas of weakness. This paper aims to examine the following: (1) the influence of relationship marketing on service quality; (2) the influence of service quality on customer satisfaction; (3) the influence of customer satisfaction on customer loyalty; (4) the influence of service quality on

*Corresponding author: Yi-Chan Chung

Graduate Institute of Business Administration, Yuanpei University of Medical Technology, Taiwan.

Email: kent4321@ms19.hinet.net

customer loyalty; (5) the intensity of relationship marketing and the satisfaction with service quality. The purpose is identify the areas of weakness for the reference of the industry.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Relationship Marketing

Halimi et al. (2011) posited that relationship marketing is achieved via exchange and commitment so as to establish, maintain and strengthen the relationship with customers. Armstrong & Kotler (2000) suggested that relationship marketing is the process of creating, maintaining and augmenting the value relationship with customers and other interest groups. Huang and Wang (2012) indicated that relationship marketing is the long-term personal and value-adding interaction to confirm, maintain and establish a contact network with individual customers as well as an integrating power that continues to enhance this mutual-benefiting relationship. This paper summarizes relevant literature (Kotler, 2003; Kao et al., 2008; Lin & Lu, 2010; Palmatier et al., 2009) and divides relationship marketing into three constructs, i.e. financial bonding, social bonding and structural bonding, in the context of the characteristics of the optician industry.

Service Quality

Parasuraman et al. (1988) emphasized that service quality is determined by customers on the basis of the gap between the services they expect and the services they receive. Parasuraman et al. (1985) summarized ten constructs for the measurement of service quality. These ten constructs are reliability, responsiveness, competence, proximity, etiquette, communication, credibility, safety, understandability and tangibility. Parasuraman et al. (1988) conducted a factor analysis on the ten constructs that influence service quality as they proposed in 1985, so as to condense these constructs into five, i.e. reliability, tangibility, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. According to Haywood-Farmer (1998), the three constructs for service quality are (1) facilities, processes and procedures,

including geographic locations, premise layouts, size and décor, coordination of the servicing process and the scope of services renders; (2) behavior of service personnel, such as timeliness, speed, attitude, friendliness, consideration, agility, neatness, etiquette, communication ability, complaint responses and problem solving; (3) professional judgment of service personnel, such as diagnosis, honesty, flexibility, reliability, acuity, knowledge and skills.

This paper summarizes the findings of Parasuraman et al. (1985), Parasuraman et al. (1988), Smith and Barclay (1997), Haywood-Farmer, J. (1988) and develops a measurement of seven constructs on service quality in the context of the characteristics of the optician industry. The seven constructs are responsiveness, professionalism, tangibility, convenience, reliability, empathy and assurance.

Customer Satisfaction

Lee et al. (2008) mentioned that customer satisfaction is an emotional response resultant from appropriate assessments of consumption experience. Ostrom & Iacobucci (1995) posited that the measurement for customer satisfaction includes product prices, service efficiency, service personnel's attitudes and the gap between company performances and ideal performances. Kotler (2003) indicated that customer satisfaction is the intensity of the pleasant or disappointing experience on the basis of the expectations for product functions and features. Phillip et al. (2003) suggested that customer satisfaction is the level of gratification with the complete service process. This paper explores the three constructs of customer satisfaction, i.e. satisfaction with facilities and environments, satisfaction with services and satisfaction with products, on the basis of the characteristics of the optician industry and the results of the literature review.

Customer Loyalty

Bei & Chiao (2001) defined customer loyalty as the repeated purchase of certain products/services over a period of time. Chang et al. (2009) argued

that customer loyalty is the commitment to the repurchase of preferred products/services. Kim et al. (2010) defined customer loyalty as the pleasure felt by consumers and commitment by consumers to repurchases and recommend to others. Chen (2012) suggested that loyalty is the repurchase of products, maintenance of long-term relationships and willingness to recommend to others. This study refers to Chen (2012), Roberts et al. (2003), Li et al. (2006), Cronin et al. (2000), Kim et al. (2010) and takes into account the characteristics of the optician industry in the development of the measurement for customer loyalty.

Relationship Marketing and Service Quality

Kuo (2013) proposed a significant and positive correlation between relationship marketing and service quality. Bennett & Barkensjo (2005) indicated that the greater the intensity of relationship marketing, the higher the service quality. Shih et al. (2015) suggested that good relationship marketing helps to improve service quality. Chung (2015) found that relationship marketing has a significant and positive influence on service quality. Brun et al. (2014) mentioned that relationship marketing and relevant management functions can improve the perceived service quality and boost customer loyalty. Based on the above literature review, this paper develops the first hypothesis H1: Relationship marketing has a significant and positive influence on service quality.

Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction

Lin (2007) indicated that good service quality meets customer needs and hence boosts customer satisfaction. Zeithaml et al. (1996) suggested that better service quality improves customer satisfaction. Cronin & Taylor (1992) mentioned that enhanced service quality increases customer satisfaction. Kuo et al. (2009) argued that improved service quality can boost customer satisfaction and hence company profits and competitiveness. Chen (2015) pointed out that the tangibility, reliability, assurance and empathy as service qualities all have significant influence on customer satisfaction. Based on the above literature review, this paper develops the second hypothesis H2: Service quality

has a significant and positive influence on customer satisfaction.

Customer Satisfaction and Customer Loyalty

Flavian et al (2006) suggested that customer satisfaction has a significant and positive influence on customer loyalty. Zeitham & Bitner (2000) posited that customer satisfaction is the antecedent of loyalty. Singh & Sirdeshmukh (2000) indicated that customer satisfaction with previous purchases has positive influence on the establishment of loyalty. Rechinheld & Sasser (1990) mentioned that customer satisfaction boosts customer loyalty. Bolton (1998) pointed out that enhanced customer satisfaction increases repurchase willingness and actual repurchases. Chang & Tu (2005) suggested that customer satisfaction has positive influence on customer loyalty. Based on the above literature review, this paper develops the third hypothesis H3: Customer satisfaction has a significant and positive influence on customer loyalty.

Service Quality and Customer Loyalty

Wong & Sohal (2003) conducted a survey on department stores in Australia and the results suggest that service quality has a positive influence on customer loyalty. Ravald & Gronroos (1996) mentioned that service quality improvement is necessary to increase repurchase probabilities and customer loyalty. Baker & Crompton (2000) indicated that the greater the service quality, the higher the customer satisfaction, loyalty and repurchase willingness. Huang (2015) suggested that service quality of any levels is significantly and positively correlated with customer loyalty. Chang (2015) pointed out that service quality has significant and positive influence on customer loyalty. Based on the above literature review, this paper develops the fourth hypothesis H4: Service quality has a significant and positive influence on customer loyalty.

RESEARCH METHOD

This paper explores the relationships among relationship marketing, service quality, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty in the optician industry. Based on the results of the literature

above, this paper develops the following research hypotheses:

H₁: Relationship marketing has a significant and positive influence on service quality.

H₂: Service quality has a significant and positive influence on customer satisfaction.

H₃: Customer satisfaction has a significant and positive influence on customer loyalty.

H₄: Service quality has a significant and positive influence on customer loyalty.

Questionnaire Collection and Data Analysis

This questionnaire consists of four sections and the measurement is based on the Likert 5-point scale. Section 1 covers the three constructs of relationship marketing, i.e. financial bonding, social bonding and structural bonding. Section 2 deals with the seven constructs of service quality, i.e. responsiveness, professionalism, tangibility, convenience, reliability, empathy and assurance. Section 3 examines the three constructs of customer satisfaction, i.e. satisfaction with facilities and environments, satisfaction with services and satisfaction with products. Section 4 is about customer loyalty. A total of 300 questionnaires were released to the customers who have visited the surveyed optician from February to April, 2016. The number of recovered effective questionnaires was 251. Nunnally (1978) suggested that the reliability of above 0.7 (Table 1) in the exploratory study is considered sufficient. This paper uses the SPSS statistical software, for data processing and analysis. The statistical techniques employed are ANOVA and t test analysis.

TABLE 1 HERE

Variable Measurement Method

The measured variables are relationship marketing, service quality, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. The measurement method is described below:

1. Measurement of Relationship Marketing

This paper examines relationship marketing with three constructs, i.e. financial bonding, social bonding and structural bonding, as follows:

- (1). Financial bonding: (a) Our shop frequently offers incentives and promotions; (b) Our shop offers discounts and promotions; (c) You enjoy more discounts once you have become a member; (d) Our shop offers discounts to regular customers; (e) Our shop sends mail to you regarding promotional campaigns; (f) Our shop stays in close contact with you.
- (2). Social bonding: (a) Our shop knows about your requirements and preferences; (b) Our shop cares about how you are getting on with our products/services; (c) You receive our cards/gifts on special occasions; (d) Our website offers a variety of inquiry functions; (e) Our shop gives you suggestion according to your needs; (f) Your problems or complaints are resolved immediately; (g) Our shop offers services by partnering up with other companies.
- (3). Structural bonding: (a) Our shop provides information in relation to products/services; (b) Our shop offers innovative products/services; (c) Our services are of better quality and features compared to others.

The measurement is based on the Likert 5 scale ranging from 5 (strongly agree to) to 1 (strongly disagree).

2. Measurement of Service Quality

This study examines service quality with a total of seven constructs, i.e. responsiveness, professionalism, tangibility, convenience, reliability, empathy and assurance.

- (1). Responsiveness: (a) Our service personnel swiftly respond to your inquiries and problems; (b) Our service personnel promptly provide the services you require; (c) Our service personnel care about the rights of customers and will never ignore your request no matter how busy they are; (d) Our service personnel are equipped with sufficient professional knowledge to articulate the materials, functions and usage methods of the products.

- (2). Professionalism: (a) Our service personnel can detail your eyesight status and our suggested solutions; (b) Our service personnel provide skillful and professional services; (c) Our service personnel provide services catering to your preferences; (d) Our service personnel can swiftly attend to customer needs; (e) Our service personnel can quickly handle customers' problems; (f) Our service personnel hold professional certificates.
- (3). Tangibility: (a) Our shop is equipped with state-of-the-art optometry inspection equipment; (b) Our shop is equipped with state-of-the-art lens grinding equipment; (c) Our shop provides consultation and advice in eye care; (d) Our shop offers glasses frames and accessories of different designs; (e) Our shop provides a complete suite of inspection services (e.g. ophthalmoscopy, slit lamps and visual function).
- (4). Convenience: (a) Our location is easily accessible; (b) It is easy to order products with us and you receive your orders quickly; (c) We offer a variety of payment methods; (d) We deliver your orders promptly.
- (5). Reliability: (a) Our service personnel deliver what they promise; (b) Our shop is tidy, clean and comfortable; (c) Our service personnel can accurately analyze customer requirements and provide bespoke services accordingly; (d) Our service personnel can pay attention to and protect customers' privacy whilst rendering services; (e) Our service personnel can do the things right at the first attempt.
- (6). Empathy: (a) Our service personnel provide a suite of services swiftly and accurately; (b) Our services satisfy your immediate needs; (c) Our service personnel take a proactive approach in delivering services specific to your requirements; (d) Our service personnel make extra efforts to resolve your problems; (e) Our service personnel can articulate our services.
- (7). Assurance: (a) Our service personnel provide professional responses to any questions; (b) Our service personnel provide responsible services; (c) Our service personnel are able to answer any of your questions; (d) Our service personnel provide services bespoke to

individual customers; (e) Our service personnel deliver services of consistent quality.

The measurement is based on the Likert 5 scale ranging from 5 (strongly agree to) to 1 (strongly disagree).

3. Measurement of Customer Satisfaction

This paper evaluates customer services with three constructs, i.e. satisfaction with facilities and environments, satisfaction with services and satisfaction with products on the basis of the above literature review and in the context of the optician industry characteristics.

- (1). Satisfaction with facilities and environments: (a) Our premise environment is pleasant; (b) We have a complete suite of inspection equipment; (c) We offer satisfactory inspection services; (d) Our shop is equipped with state-of-the-art information management and equipment; (e) We offer a satisfactory experience to customers who use our state-of-the-art facilities.
- (2). Satisfaction with services: (a) Provides satisfactory responses to customer inquiries; (b) The efficiency of our customer service is satisfactory; (c) Our service attitude is satisfactory; (d) Our consultation services are satisfactory; (e) The complete range of our inspection services are satisfactory; (f) Our warranty and after-sale maintenance can satisfy customer needs.
- (3). Satisfaction with products: (a) The variety of our product offerings is satisfactory; (b) The quality of our products is satisfactory; (c) We provide up-to-date information about our promotions; (d) We offer good value for money.

The measurement is based on the Likert 5 scale ranging from 5 (strongly agree to) to 1 (strongly disagree).

4. Measurement of Customer Loyalty

Based on the above literature view and the optician industry characteristics, this paper measures customer loyalty with the following metrics: (a)

intended repurchases; (b) first priority for the purchase of relevant products; (c) recommendation to friends and family; (d) sharing the information with other people.

The measurement is based on the Likert 5 scale ranging from 5 (strongly agree to) to 1 (strongly disagree).

Results Analysis

Relationship between relationship marketing and service quality

This paper divides the scores on relationship marketing (in terms of financial bonding, social bonding and structural bonding) into two groups (high and low) and examines whether the means of these ratings are significantly different from those on service quality (measured in seven constructs, i.e. responsiveness, professionalism, tangibility, convenience, reliability, empathy and assurance). Table 2 summarizes the ANOVA results regarding the influence of relationship marketing on service quality. The research findings support H1: Relationship marketing has a significant and positive influence on service quality.

TABLE 2 HERE

Relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction

This paper divides the scores on service quality (measured in seven constructs, i.e. responsiveness, professionalism, tangibility, convenience, reliability, empathy and assurance) into two groups (high and low) and examine whether the means of these ratings are significantly different from those of customer satisfaction (i.e. satisfaction with facilities and environments, satisfaction with services and satisfaction with products). Table 3 summarizes the ANOVA results regarding the influence of relationship service quality on customer satisfaction. The research findings support H2: Service quality has a significant and positive influence on customer satisfaction.

TABLE 3 HERE

Relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty

This paper separates the scores on customer satisfaction (i.e. satisfaction with facilities and environments, satisfaction with services and satisfaction with products) into two groups (high and low) and examines whether their means on customer loyalty are significantly different. Table 4 shows the ANOVA results regarding the influence of customer satisfaction on customer loyalty. The research findings support H3: Customer satisfaction has a significant and positive influence on customer loyalty.

TABLE 4 HERE

Relationship between service quality and customer loyalty

This paper divides the scores on service quality (measured in seven constructs, i.e. responsiveness, professionalism, tangibility, convenience, reliability, empathy and assurance) into two groups (high and low) and examine whether these means are significantly different from those of customer loyalty (high and low scores). Table 5 presents the ANOVA results regarding the influence of relationship service quality on customer loyalty. The research findings support H4: Service quality has a significant and positive influence on customer loyalty.

TABLE 5 HERE

Intensity of Relationship Marketing

This paper measures the intensity of relationship marketing with a total of 16 questions covering three constructs, i.e. financial bonding, social bonding and structural bonding, and conducts a t test on the results (Table 6). The numbers suggest that customers are satisfied with all the metrics of structural bonding. Customers are satisfied with three metrics of financial bonding (i.e. regular promotions, discounts and incentives, and specific discounts to regular customers). They are also pleased with two metrics of social bonding (i.e. advice according to customer needs and immediate resolutions to any problems or complaints). The

optician company surveyed may improve on the items attracting a less-than-ideal score ($\mu = 4$)

TABLE 6 HERE

Effectiveness of Service Quality

This paper evaluates service quality with seven constructs, i.e. responsiveness, professionalism, tangibility, convenience, reliability, empathy and assurance, and conducts a t test on the results. Customers are satisfied with service quality except one metric in relation to convenience (different ways to make payments). The optician company surveyed may amend the issue rated below satisfactory levels ($\mu = 4$).

CONCLUSION

This paper gauges the effectiveness of service quality with a total of 34 questions covering seven constructs (i.e. responsiveness, professionalism, tangibility, convenience, reliability, empathy and assurance) and conducts a t-stats test on the results. The numbers indicate that payment options are considered less satisfactory and the optician company in question should make amends accordingly.

In terms of relationship marketing, the customers are satisfied with all the metrics of structural bonding. However, they are only satisfied with three metrics of financial bonding (i.e. regular promotions, discounts and incentives, and specific discounts to regular customers) and with two metrics of social bonding (i.e. advice according to customer needs and immediate resolutions to any problems or complaints). The optician company concerned should improve on the issues highlighted in the survey.

This study conducts a study on H optician company in the examination of the relationships among relationship marketing, service quality, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. The research findings suggest that better service quality improves customer satisfaction. Relationship marketing also has a significant and positive influence on service quality. Therefore, H optician company can boost customer satisfaction and loyalty by stepping up relationship marketing and service quality. This paper only performs a survey

on H optician company. Future studies may conduct an empirical analysis on other industries, so as to put together a complete picture of the relationships among relationship marketing, service quality, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty

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APPENDIX

Table 1 : Cronbach's α coefficients for all variables

Questionnaire Dimension		Cronbach's α
Relationship marketing	Financial bonding	0.727
	Social bonding	0.838
	Structural bonding	0.811
Service quality	Responsiveness	0.879
	professionalism	0.858
	Tangibility	0.798
	Convenience	0.860
	Reliability	0.922
	Empathy	0.909
	Assurance	0.909
Customer satisfaction	Facilities and environments	0.906
	Services	0.947
	Products	0.926
Customer loyalty		0.941

Table 2 : ANOVA of relationship marketing on service quality

		Financial bonding	Social bonding	Structural bonding
Responsiveness	Low [#]	4.309	4.236	4.195
	High [#]	4.656	4.833	4.617
	F-value	16.691	71.611	45.348
	P-value	0.000*	0.000*	0.000*
Professionalism	Low [#]	4.496	4.440	4.378
	High [#]	4.789	4.918	4.786
	F-value	18.332	69.434	70.164
	P-value	0.000*	0.000*	0.000*
Tangibility	Low [#]	4.615	4.565	4.489
	High [#]	4.787	4.919	4.862
	F-value	7.412	42.631	72.511
	P-value	0.007	0.000*	0.000*
Convenience	Low [#]	4.154	4.103	4.034
	High [#]	4.622	4.697	4.521
	F-value	27.699	59.347	54.407
	P-value	0.000*	0.000*	0.000*
Reliability	Low [#]	4.350	4.289	4.200
	High [#]	4.689	4.828	4.705
	F-value	20.198	73.291	94.951
	P-value	0.000*	0.000*	0.000*
Empathy	Low [#]	4.353	4.293	4.192
	High [#]	4.751	4.874	4.749
	F-value	23.384	69.607	95.998
	P-value	0.000*	0.000*	0.000*
Assurance	Low [#]	4.421	4.359	4.259
	High [#]	4.778	4.916	4.800
	F-value	19.839	68.203	97.446
	P-value	0.000*	0.000*	0.000*

Note : Low[#] : the average score lower than 4.00 ; High[#] : the average score higher than 4.00 ;
 * p < 0.05.

Table 3 ANOVA of service quality on customer satisfaction

		Facilities and environments	Services	Products
Responsiveness	Low [#]	4.311	4.223	3.992
	High [#]	4.719	4.685	4.567
	F-value	52.080	61.909	66.103
	P-value	0.000*	0.000*	0.000*
Professionalism	Low [#]	4.196	4.127	3.885
	High [#]	4.653	4.601	4.459
	F-value	42.480	41.039	40.863
	P-value	0.000*	0.000*	0.000*
Tangibility	Low [#]	4.106	4.127	3.853
	High [#]	4.633	4.566	4.422
	F-value	41.413	24.252	28.163
	P-value	0.000*	0.000*	0.000*
Convenience	Low [#]	4.344	4.309	4.081
	High [#]	4.832	4.751	4.672
	F-value	86.576	58.524	75.003
	P-value	0.000*	0.000*	0.000*
Reliability	Low [#]	4.227	4.147	3.877
	High [#]	4.832	4.796	4.721
	F-value	163.211	172.924	222.764
	P-value	0.000*	0.000*	0.000*
Empathy	Low [#]	4.182	4.094	3.817
	High [#]	4.817	4.784	4.700
	F-value	183.939	205.007	252.173
	P-value	0.000*	0.000*	0.000*
Assurance	Low [#]	4.123	3.996	3.772
	High [#]	4.771	4.750	4.618
	F-value	166.596	238.937	180.082
	P-value	0.000*	0.000*	0.000*

Note : Low[#] : the average score lower than 4.00 ; High[#] : the average score higher than 4.00 ;
 * p < 0.05.

Table 4: ANOVA of customer satisfaction on customer loyalty

		facilities and environments	services	products
Customer loyalty	Low [#]	3.618	3.579	3.625
	High [#]	4.384	4.442	4.556
	F-value	86.255	134.026	210.890
	P-value	0.000*	0.000*	0.000*

Note : Low[#] : the average score lower than 4.00 ; High[#] : the average score higher than 4.00 ;
 * p < 0.05.

Table 5 : ANOVA of service quality on customer loyalty

		Customer loyalty
Responsiveness	Low#	3.796
	High#	4.406
	F-value	59.153
	P-value	0.000*
Professionalism	Low#	3.675
	High#	4.294
	F-value	38.205
	P-value	0.000*
Tangibility	Low#	3.706
	High#	4.243
	F-value	19.801
	P-value	0.000*
Convenience	Low#	3.874
	High#	4.538
	F-value	77.497
	P-value	0.000*
Reliability	Low#	3.728
	High#	4.527
	F-value	130.634
	P-value	0.000*
Empathy	Low#	3.651
	High#	4.520
	F-value	163.130
	P-value	0.000*
Assurance	Low#	3.583
	High#	4.450
	F-value	138.748
	P-value	0.000*

Note : Low# : the average score lower than 4.00 ; High# : the average score higher than 4.00

;

* p < 0.05.

Table 6 Intensity of Relationship Marketing

Dimension	Intensity of relationship marketing			
	Mean value	SD	T-value	p-value
Financial bonding				
1.Our shop frequently offers incentives and promotions	3.948	0.601	-1.365	0.173
2.Our shop offers discounts and promotions	4.064	0.642	1.574	0.117
3.You enjoy more discounts once you have become a member	3.769	0.717	-5.104	0.000*
4.Our shop offers discounts to regular customers	4.259	0.780	5.259	0.000*
5.Our shop sends mail to customer regarding promotional campaigns	2.650	1.137	-18.821	0.000*
6. Our shop stays in close contact with customer	3.637	0.775	-7.415	0.000*
Social bonding				
1. Our shop knows about customer requirements and preferences	3.821	0.772	-3.680	0.000*
2. Our shop cares about how you are getting on with our products/services	3.753	0.797	-4.912	0.000*
3. Customer receive our cards/gifts on special occasions	2.793	1.105	-17.309	0.000*
4. Our website offers a variety of inquiry functions	3.124	1.034	-13.433	0.000*
5. Our shop gives you suggestion according to customer needs	4.215	0.567	6.011	0.000*
6. Your problems or complaints are resolved immediately	4.239	0.599	6.324	0.000*
7. Our shop offers services by partnering up with other companies	3.865	0.730	-2.938	0.004*
Structural bonding				
1. Our shop provides information in relation to products/services	3.920	0.749	-1.684	0.093
2. Our shop offers innovative products/services	4.008	0.743	0.170	0.865
3. Our services are of better quality and features compared to others	4.434	0.578	11.893	0.000*

Note : $H_0: \mu = 4$, $H_1: \mu \neq 4$; * $p < 0.05$