BEHAVIORAL LOYALTY IN PERFORMING ARTS: DO EMOTIONS MATTER WITHOUT INVOLVEMENT?

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ABSTRACT

Prior research in arts marketing has pointed out that emotions and product involvement are antecedents of the purchase and consumption of performing arts. As a consequence, both variables can contribute to explain why consumers repeat the purchase of this category, that is, their behavioral loyalty. However, prior research has devoted almost no attention to the contextual effects of these two predictors of such behaviors. The main purpose of this study is to investigate the role of emotions and involvement in the formation of behavioral loyalty for performing arts. Alternative structural models of the relations between these variables are tested. The findings show that product involvement fully mediates the relation between emotions and behavioral loyalty.

Keywords: emotions, involvement, behavioral loyalty, performing arts.

1. INTRODUCTION

Performing arts are a type of experiential and hedonic products. It is conventional wisdom in marketing that emotions are fundamental motivators of the consumption of hedonic products (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982). In fact, hedonic products are not consumed to satisfy functional needs, but instead serve as powerful experiential devices that consumers use to project their fantasies, to get a sense of fulfillment, to escape their daily reality, and to have fun (Holbrook & Hirschman,
1982). Involvement has also been identified as an important antecedent of the purchase and consumption of hedonic products (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982). Product involvement, defined as "the personal relevance or importance of a product category" (Coulter, Price, and Feick, 2003: 152), functions as a personal attitudinal trait

that is able to induce a purchase and consumption behavior (Olsen, 2007). As a consequence, both emotions and involvement can contribute to explain why consumers repeat the purchase of performing arts, which is essentially behavioral loyalty.
Given the importance of emotions and involvement for the purchase, consumption and repurchase of performing arts, it is quite surprising that prior research has devoted almost no attention to the contextual effects of these two powerful predictors of such behaviors. The main purpose of this study is to discuss and test the role of emotions and involvement in the formation of behavioral loyalty at the product category level for performing arts. We will describe alternative models, which suggest that involvement may be a mediator or a moderator between emotions and behavioral loyalty when all these constructs are measured at the same level of specificity (product category level).
The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. First, we present the theoretical framework behind our proposal. Second, we describe the method we adopted and the results we obtained. Finally, we discuss our findings.

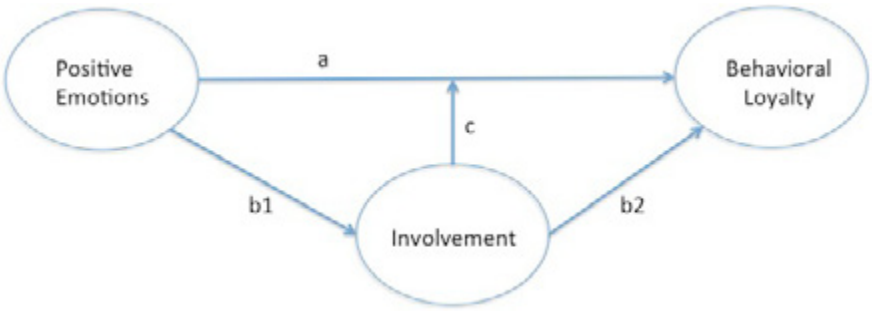
2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Since Hirschman and Holbrook's work (1982) it is conventional wisdom in marketing that emotions are fundamental motivators of the consumption of hedonic products. Performing arts literature highlights the role of emotions as the most important motive to consumption (Cuadrado & Mollà,
2000). More recently, research in performing arts investigated the specific relationship between emotions and repurchase intention (Hume, 2008; Hume & Sullivan Mort, 2010). These studies reveal that emotional states play a central role in the experience of performing arts. However, emotions are not directly related to repurchase intention (Hume 2008, Hume & Sullivan Mort, 2010). According to previous literature, the investigation of emotions and consumption behaviors in performing arts is still in its infancy and deeper investigation is strongly suggested (Hume, 2008).
Involvement has also been identified as an important antecedent of the purchase and consumption of hedonic products (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982) and performing arts (Hume & Sullivan Mort, 2008; Johnson & Garbarino 2001). In a recent study, Hume and Sullivan Mort (2008) show that product involvement has a direct positive impact on repurchase intention. More in details, involvement has a direct relationship on all the other antecedents of repurchase intention considered in the study (e.g. satisfaction and perceived value). These results suggest a pivotal role of involvement in repurchase intention in performing arts. Indeed, product involvement, defined as "the personal relevance or importance of a product category" (Coulter, Price, and Feick, 2003: 152), functions as a personal attitudinal trait that is able to induce a purchase and consumption behavior (Olsen, 2007).
As a consequence, both emotions and involvement can contribute to explain why consumers repeat the purchase of performing arts, that is, their behavioral loyalty. However, prior research has devoted almost no attention to the contextual effects of these two predictors of such behaviors. It is worth mentioning here that performing arts literature indicates emotions as the most important motive to consumption, but not for all attendees (Cuadrado & Mollà, 2000). Furthermore, performing arts literature suggests the importance of emotional aspect differs according to theatregoer's involvement (Hume 2008). Additionally, service marketing literature recognizes a moderator role of involvement on the effect of positive emotions on loyalty (Bloemer & de Ruyter, 1999). Finally, performing arts literature highlights that "there is an inherent propensity to loyalty, that is certain individuals are more likely to show loyalty than others" (Guillon, 2011: 38). We argue that this difference could be due to different degrees of involvement. For these reasons, we argue that the contextual effect of emotions and involvement has to be investigated in order to better explain behavioral loyalty in performing arts.

2.1. Summary of alternative models

In order to test the competing hypotheses on the relations between emotions, product involvement and behavioral loyalty, we contrast three rival structural models (fig. 1)

Figure 1: Pathways investigated



The first one views product involvement as a partial mediator between emotions and behavioral loyalty. In this model we allow direct relationships between positive emotions and behavioral loyalty (path a) and suggest that product involvement is one route through which emotions translate into consumer behavior (paths b1 and b2). The second model suggests product involvement as a full mediator between positive emotions and behavioral loyalty, considering it the only route through which emotions translates into consumer behavior (paths b1 and b2). The third model considers product involvement as moderator, suggesting a variation in the magnitude of the effect of emotions on behavioral loyalty (paths a and c).

3. METHOD

This study focuses on live theatre performance. Since emotions are specific to a product category, we conducted a preliminary qualitative research with the aim of eliciting a list of positive emotions related to our chosen category.

3.1. *Qualitative Research*

For the elicitation we used the Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique (Zaltman, 1995). We interviewed twenty theatregoers in two different European cities. To come up with the final list of emotions, we ran an analysis of frequency of the emotional states reported by the interviewers, interpreted according to the Consumption Emotion Set proposed by Richins (1997). The final list of positive emotions related to the attendance of live theatre performances include seven emotional states: joy, contentment, optimism, love, romantic love, peacefulness, and excitement.

3.2. Model Testing

Alternative structural models of the relations between these variables are tested. To test the three different models, we ran a survey on a convenience sample of 182 theatregoers, between 18 and 34 years old, in two different European cities. The questionnaire was administered personally by one of the authors. Respondents were selected among attendants of two large theatres in the two cities, similar in terms of genre of live performances. We pooled the data of the two samples after running an ANOVA and verifying the absence of statistical difference between the two.

We measured positive emotions related to the live theatre performance product category with a 5-point Likert scale, following the recommendation of Bagozzi, Gopinath, and Nyer (1999). Product involvement was measured using a 17-item scale adapted from Zaichkowsky (1985). Behavioral loyalty was measured by asking respondents how often they had attended live theatre performance in the last 12 months. We used structural equation modeling to test the first two rival models and the relationships between the constructs by maximum likelihood estimation in LISREL 8.50. In addition, we ran an OLS regression to test the moderator effect, according to the number of available observations.

Table 1 Structural Parameter Estimates (β) of Rival Emotions–Involvement–Behavioral Loyalty Models.

Path	Partial Mediator Model	Full Mediator Model
Involvement → Behavioral loyalty	.32***	.27**
Positive emotions → Involvement	.65***	.65***
Positive emotions → Behavioral loyalty	-.08 (n.s)	
Model goodness-of-fit Statistics		
X^2(d.f.)	521.01 (d.f.=273)	521.47 (d.f.=274)
RMSEA	.08	.08
NNFI	.95	.96
CFI	.96	.95
SRMR	.06	.06
R^2 involvement	.43	.42
R^2 behavioral loyalty	.08	.07

Note: ns = nonsignificant. *$p < .05$ **$p < .01$ ***$p < .001$
Thresholds: RMSEA<.06; NNFI >.90; CFI>.90; SRMR<.06.

3.3. Findings

As reported in Table 1, all two models fit well and they are able to explain an acceptable percentage of the variance in involvement. However, they are able to explain only a limited percentage of the variance in behavioral loyalty.

In the Partial Mediator Model, positive emotions are positively related to involvement (β =.65, p<.001). The positive emotions-loyalty relation is not significant, while the relation involvement- loyalty is positive (β =.32, p <.001). In the Full Mediator Model, the relations between positive emotions and involvement, and between involvement and loyalty are positive (β =.65, p<.001; β =.27, p <.01 respectively).

In order to verify if involvement is partial (model 1: paths a, b1 and b2) or a full mediator (model 2: paths b1 and b2) a formal test of mediation was performed. As reported in table 2, involvement is a full mediator between positive emotions and behavioral loyalty.

Table 2 Tests of causal mediation

Model		Goodness-of-fit	Test of hypothesis and conclusion
2 (fig. 1)	Full Mediator Model: Baseline	$\chi2(274)=521.47$	
1 (fig. 1)	Partial Mediator Model: Added paths from emotions to loyalty	$\chi2(273)=521.01$	M2-M1: $\chi2(1)=.46$, $p>.25$ Involvement fully mediates the effect of positive emotions on loyalty.

Finally, we tested the role of involvement as moderator of the relationship between positive emotions and loyalty (model 3: paths a and c). We analyzed the data using moderated regressions models. The dependent variable is represented by loyalty. The independent variables are positive emotions, involvement and the interactions between positive emotions and involvement. To improve the interpretability of the main effects in the presence of interaction variables, we mean centered the independent and the dependent variables before computing the interaction one (see Jaccard, Wan, and Turrisi, 1990). To estimate the unconditional main effects, first we examined the models lower in the hierarchy that do not include the interaction term under consideration. Then, we included in the models the two-way interaction between positive emotions and involvement. The join effect of positive emotions and involvement on behavioral loyalty was not significant (see table 3): involvement does not moderate the energizing force of emotions in fueling behavioral loyalty.

Table 3 Results of regression model for behavioral loyalty

Independent variable	Main effects only	Main Effects + two-Way Interactions
Positive emotions β	-.07 (n.s.)	-.07 (n.s.)
Involvement β	.29***	.29***
Positive emotions X Involvement (β)		-.01 (n.s.)
Significance of F	.00	.00
R^2	.07	.07
Adjusted R^2	.06	.05

**** p<.001*

4. DISCUSSION

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the relations between emotions, product involvement and behavioral loyalty for one specific performing arts category: live theatre performance. The present study theorizes a positive direct relationship between positive emotions and product involvement in performing arts setting, never discussed before. Furthermore, our findings contribute to extant knowledge of these relations in two main respects. First, our findings demonstrate that without the mediating effect of product involvement, positive emotions have no direct effects on behavioral loyalty. Second, our findings provide a strong support for the positive relationship between

product involvement and behavioral loyalty. In both mediating models – full and partial - our results confirm prior research on the topic (Gainer, 1993; Seiders, Voss, Grewal, and Godfrey, 2005), and demonstrate that the importance of a performing arts category for a consumer leads her to repeat the purchase of that category.

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