



The mediating role of trust in the leading premium cosmetic clinics in Bangkok: The relationship of the media, trust, and beauty enhancement repurchasing

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Article Info

Article history:

Received 10 February 2018

Revised 27 January 2019

Accepted 29 January 2019

Available online 1 December 2020

Keywords:

media,
premium cosmetic clinics,
repurchasing,
trust

Abstract

This study has investigated the mediating effect of trust regarding the path from the media to beauty enhancement repurchasing. The characteristics of the media and trust are explored concerning beauty enhancement repurchasing. More especially, the study proposes a conceptual framework whereby the patients' trust in their doctor mediates the influence of the media's characteristics regarding beauty enhancement repurchasing. A convenience sampling approach was conducted, and the Likert scale was employed to measure the variables. The questionnaire was aimed at patients who had previously made a purchase at such clinics. Structural equation modelling was applied to a sample of 218 patients attending a number of leading cosmetic clinics in Bangkok. The results show that all the attributes of the media provide a positive direct effect on the beauty enhancement repurchasing decision. In addition, the trust factor in the doctor mediates the influence of the media's characteristics that influence beauty enhancement repurchasing. Theoretical and managerial implications of this research are provided.

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Introduction

Development of the aesthetic and cosmetic industry is increasingly providing modern women with various options to improve their appearance and attractiveness. Thailand has followed this trend. The market value of the cosmetic clinics in Thailand was approximately between 20 and 30 billion baht in 2014, and this has increased rapidly to 23–36 billion baht currently. More interestingly, B plus cosmetic clinics are growing and preparing for the ASEAN community. They have a strong tendency to become potential premium cosmetic clinics in Bangkok. Thus, they are an interesting segment to study in the cosmetic clinic sector. With expansion of

conventional marketing advertising such cosmetic clinics' information, the media provides a powerful influence on the customers' mind concerning repurchasing (Seewan & Benjarongkij, 2013), as well as the doctors who play a vital role in the patients' decision when selecting a product/service (Abraham, Sick, Anderson, Berg, Dehmer, & Tufano, 2011).

However, limited attention has been paid regarding trust in terms of the doctor as the seller and the patient as the buyer, given that trust could increasingly encourage the media post-received by the patients regarding their beauty enhancement repurchase decision. Trust could act as the service mediator, since the patients are likely to feel more open and would tend to believe the doctor's advice and could increasingly enhance the patient's chances regarding beauty enhancement repurchasing. Thus, this study has three research objectives:

1. To investigate the influence of the media on beauty transformation repurchasing decisions

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2. To determine the influence of the media concerning the patients' trust in doctors

3 To examine the relationship between the media and beauty transformation repurchasing and its mediation through trust

Literature Review

Theoretical Background and Hypotheses Development

Previous study of the relationship between the media and the beauty enhancement repurchasing decision

Repurchasing means the chance that an individual will continue to enjoy the services provided by cosmetic clinics in the future (Chiu, Hsu, Lai, & Chang, 2012). In order to make the patients repurchase, the importance of the beauty enhancement content needs to be emphasized and persuaded effectively through the media, such as TV and social media, since they are the most effective ways of communicating with the consumer. The media herein refers to various platforms, including TV and social media that present the credibility, quality, and persuasiveness of the content offered by the cosmetic clinics promoting their services (Luo, Luo, Schatzberg, & Sia, 2013). Seewan and Benjarongkij (2013) have found that the more time spent on media viewership the higher the chance that the viewers will be persuaded to perceive the real world as that presented by the media, especially on television channels, making them desire to achieve a better self-image. Moreover, if a seller's online media provides the customers with qualified, credible, and convincing content and platform, this will result in increasing the likelihood of attracting and retaining the customers (Lin & Sun, 2009). These content characteristics are connected to the customers' behavioral intentions, including repurchasing, recommendations, and preferences (Chiu, Hsieh, & Kao, 2005).

By doing this, the customer can be persuaded and reminded of the product. Therefore, this leads to the following hypotheses, which include media credibility, quality, and persuasiveness:

H₁: Media has an influence on beauty enhancement repurchasing.

Influence of the media on the patients' trust in the doctor

Establishing a relationship between a patient and a doctor or having trust in such doctor who is considered to be a service mediator, would provide a greater chance to gain a customers' favorable repurchasing decision. To support of this view, Abraham et al. (2011) present that consumers consider the attributes of a doctor to be of the greatest importance in selecting the product/service, and they suggest that the capabilities of the advertising media could build more trust in the attributes of the doctor. Therefore, the above description leads to the following hypothesis:

H₂: The media has an influence on the patients' trust in their doctor.

Influence of the patients' trust in the doctor on repurchasing

Trust can be represented as a mechanism for uncertainty reduction or alleviation if any uncertainty may arise (Pavlou, Liang, & Xue, 2007). Trust can be defined as a person's belief that a partner acts in a consistent manner and follows their own words and should be considered as the will to forgo opportunistic behavior. Accordingly, trust herein refers to a patient's belief that the doctor will act in accordance with

what they say or commit to based on the best interest of the patient (Srinivasan & Srinivasan, 2012). Also, trust is viewed as a cognitive construct that includes honesty, benevolence, and competence. Honesty is the belief that the partner will accomplish the promises with goodwill (Doney & Cannon, 1997). Benevolence is the idea that the salesperson respects the welfare of the customer (Doney & Cannon, 1997). Finally, competence covers the skills and resources of the salesperson to implement the business transaction reliably (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Goold and Lipkin (1999) pointed out that doctors are one of the most customer-recommended business in terms of the cosmetic sector. They have the potential to persuade more patients to conform to their recommended treatment if they display their medical expertise (Cialdini, 2018), and most patients still want more information than they routinely supposed would be provided at first by the doctor (Coulter, Parsons, & Askham, 2008). This can relatively increase the chance of a patient being persuaded by the doctor (Cialdini, 2018). Furthermore, trust in the doctor-patient relationship is a critical factor in such patients' decision to attend and repurchase from a specific clinic. All things considered, this leads to the following hypothesis:

H₃: The patients' trust in the doctor has a positive influence on the beauty enhancement repurchasing decision.

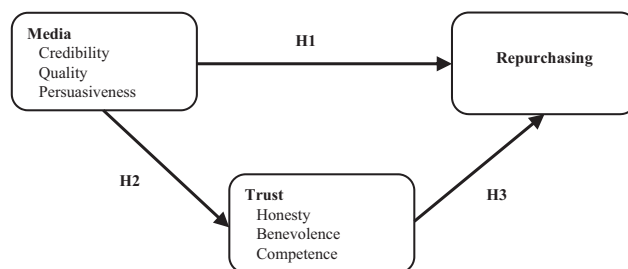


Figure 1 Conceptual framework

Methodology

Data Collection

This research collected data from customers of cosmetics clinics in Bangkok. The city is ideally located within a close distance to a rising demand for cosmetic treatments from Middle Eastern countries. Also, the city could serve as a cosmetics treatment center for five top feeder markets which are Tokyo, Taipei, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Kuala Lumpur, accounting for US\$3,256 million in tourism spending and a total of 5,457 million visitors in 2015. Particularly, cosmetic clinics in Bangkok can be categorized as per affordability and required demand services of the customers.

Researchers collected data from patients of cosmetics clinics in Bangkok using the survey instrument and data collection process from May 2017 to June 2017. This study used convenience sampling technique with the condition to assure patients of their confidentiality and anonymity of the filled questionnaires. Researcher personally administered the data collection and during this phase, they explained to the respondents' the purpose of this research and its implication.

Researchers personally approached four hundred patients of grade-B-to-B+ cosmetic clinics in Bangkok: Meko clinic, The Klinique and Romrawin. Out of 400, 230 agreed to fill the questionnaire and at the end of the data collection period, a total of 218 usable and complete questionnaires were collected for the data analysis.

With regard to the demographics, Table 1 shows that 66.1 percent of the respondents were female and 33.9 percent male; over 42 percent of the respondents were 20–29 years old; many of them had a university degree (46.8%) and earn a monthly income between 20,001–30,000 Baht (46.8%).

Table 1 Sample's socio-demographic information

	(n = 218) %
Gender	
Male	33.9
Female	66.1
Age	
20–29	42.7
30–39	40.8
40–49	6.4
50–59	10.1
Educational level	
High school or below	17.0
Vocational certificate/diploma	16.1
Bachelor Degree	46.8
Master Degree	20.2

Measurement of Variables

The study constructs are measured using items adapted from previous relevant and validated research (Cheung, Lee, & Rabjohn, 2008; Chiu et al., 2012; Doney & Cannon, 1997; Luo et al., 2013). However, it is necessary to ensure relevance and clarity of the constructs to use for this study. In order to do so, this study got the help of seven managers and academicians

from industry to establish the adequacy of the constructs and used their feedback to make necessary changes in the survey instrument. After making necessary improvements, this study conducted a pilot test with fifty customers of cosmetic clinics, and results of the pilot test were satisfactory. Likert-type scales were employed to measure the variables, (1 strongly disagree; 5 strongly agree).

Data Analysis

Two types of data analysis were employed: descriptive statistics analysis and inferential statistics analysis. After data collection process within the time period was completed, the collected data of 218 questionnaires were analyzed by running SPSS software version 22 (IBM Corporation) for descriptive analysis and a conclusion was made in terms of table presenting in terms of table of frequency, percentage and mean. Meanwhile, the Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS) was employed to analyze the inferential statistics in terms of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM).

Results

Measurement Model

In this case, all the items have Cronbach's α index exceed .7, thereby confirming the existence of reliability in the constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). In the first stage, Table 2 presents the results of the confirmatory factor analysis, which indicate that each item loaded significantly on its respective underlying concept in which all loadings were significant with t-values greater than .6 except two items named MQUA2 (.58) and COMPET2 (.53).

Table 2 Measurement model results

Construct and its variable	Measurement items	Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha
Media			
Media credibility			.816
MCRED1	Media contents are factual	.801	
MCRED2	Media contents are believable	.789	
MCRED3	Media contents are trustworthy	.736	
Media quality			.756
MQUA1	Media contents are up-to-date	.675	
MQUA2	Media contents sufficiently meet my needs	.582	
MQUA3	Media contents have sufficient breadth and depth	.676	
MQUA4	Media contents are correct	.795	
Media persuasiveness			.732
MPER1	Media contents are convincing	.665	
MPER2	Media contents are reasonable	.785	
MPER3	Media contents are strong	.658	
Trust			
Honesty			.809
HON1	Doctor usually fulfils his/her commitments	.705	
HON2	Doctor provides information sincerely	.797	
HON3	I am confident with the promises made by doctor	.799	
Benevolence			.801
BEN1	Doctor aims to achieve mutual benefits with his/her patients.	.772	
BEN2	Doctor is concerned with the present and future interests of his/her patients.	.714	
BEN3	Doctor would not intentionally do anything that would harm his/her patients.	.781	
Competence			.736
COMPET1	Doctor has necessary experiences to sell his/her products and provide services.	.780	
COMPET2	Doctor has the necessary resources to successfully carry out his/her medical operations.	.534	
COMPET3	Doctor knows his/her patients well enough to offer them products and services that are adapted to their needs.	.790	
Repurchasing			.782
REP1	I would like to continue buying products and services from this clinic in future.	.659	
REP2	Reminded of products/service, I intend to continue buying them.	.810	
REP3	I will continue purchasing products and service in the future when I am at ease with doctor.	.754	

In the second stage, the full measurement model offered an acceptable fit to the data ($\chi^2/df = 1.930$, GFI = .861, IFI = .916, TLI = .902, CFI = .915, RMSEA = .073). Even though the values for GFI did not exceed 0.9, it still met the criteria suggested by Baumgartner and Homburg (1995), and Doll, Xia, and Torkzadeh (1994) that the value is acceptable if above .8.

Moreover, Table 3 shows the correlations between the latent variables and the squared root of AVE of each construct. It can be clearly seen that there was no case for any squared root of AVE values that were less than correlation values, indicating discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Structural Model

Figure 2 shows results of the structural equation modeling indicating an adequate model fit with the data ($\chi^2/df = 1.930$, GFI = .861, IFI = .916, TLI = .902, CFI = .915, RMSEA = .073). The model explained the 70 percent variance for patients' trust

in doctors and the 92 percent for beauty transformation repurchasing.

Moreover, Table 4 reveals that beauty transformation repurchasing is determined, in order of importance by trust ($\beta = .750$, $p = .000$) and media ($\beta = .239$, $p = .040$), thereby supporting H1 and H3. The result also reveals that trust is influenced positively and significantly by media ($\beta = .835$, $p = .000$).

Table 5 presents a path analysis comprising the total effect, direct effects and indirect effects. Hypotheses H1 and H2 examined the effect of media on beauty transformation repurchasing and patients' trust in doctors for which their respective effects were .866 and .835. Hypothesis 3 made up .750 for its respective direct and total effect. Moreover, there was an indirect effect found in H1 (accounting for .626) or the path from media to repurchasing and the confirmation of H2 and H3, thereby indicating a mediating of trust.

Table 3 Discriminant validity

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Credibility	.776						
2. Quality	.410	.745					
3. Persuasiveness	.330	.368	.861				
4. Honesty	.270	.228	.421	.85			
5. Benevolence	.402	.307	.420	.286	.836		
6. Competence	.468	.381	.303	.143	.317	.779	
7. Repurchasing	.517	.61	.453	.276	.482	.461	.786

Notes: Diagonal elements in the correlation matrix of constructs are the square root of the AVE values

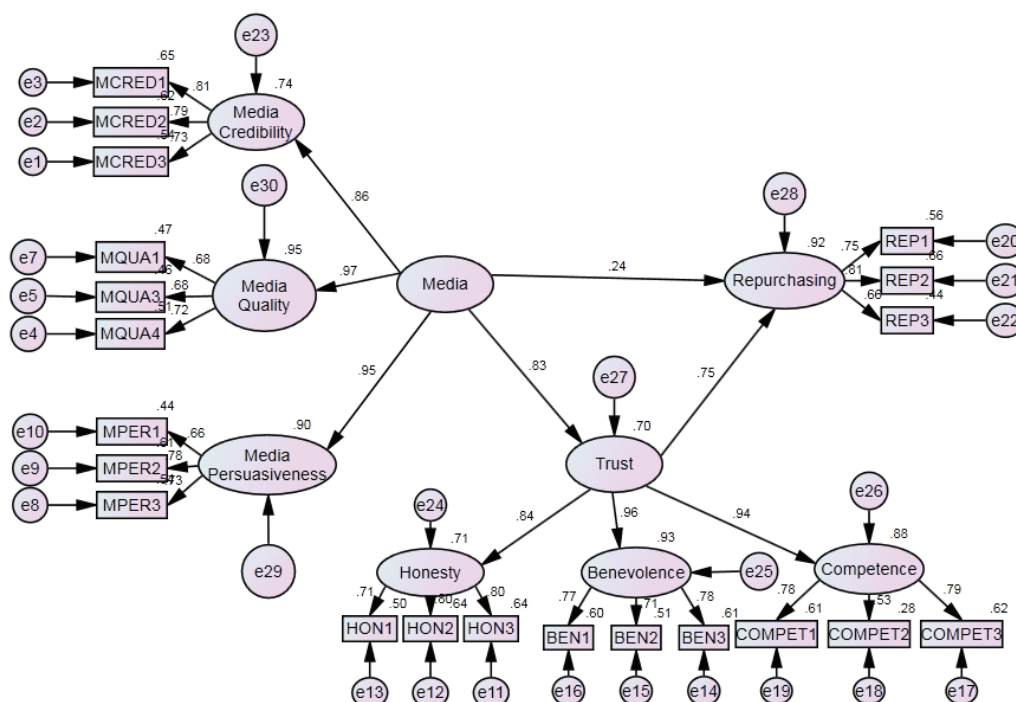


Figure 2 A result of the structural equation model

Table 4 Results of hypotheses testing

Hypotheses	Standardized path coefficients	<i>p</i>	Results
H1: Media → Repurchasing	.239	.040*	Accepted
H2: Media → Trust	.835	.000*	Accepted
H3: Trust → Repurchasing	.750	.000*	Accepted

Notes: *Implies significant at $p < .05$

Table 5 Path analysis

Hypotheses	Direct effect	Indirect effect	Total effect
H1: Media → Repurchasing	.239	.626	.866
H2: Media → Trust	.835	-	.835
H3: Trust → Repurchasing	.75	-	.75

Discussion and Conclusions

Firstly, this research has examined the influence of the media's characteristics concerning the beauty repurchasing decision by patients attending cosmetic clinics in Bangkok. Based on data collected from 218 patients attending cosmetics clinics, this research found that the media has strongly influenced the repurchasing decision. This finding could be justified by the possible explanation that the content, effectively reminded and persuaded by various advertising media, such as TV and social media, is an effective way of communicating with customers these days (Seewan & Benjarongkij, 2013). The media content serves as an effective means to communicate with potential patients by providing useful information that can enhance their chance of repurchasing, which is in accordance with the work of Lin and Sun (2009). Although such repurchase decision totally depends on the quality of the service provided by the doctor, the media content and up-to-date information can convince the patients to continue buying the products and services from cosmetic clinics in the future (Chiu et al, 2005; Lin & Sun, 2009).

Secondly, this research has investigated the mediating role of the trust relationship between the media and beauty enhancement repurchasing. This research found that the relationship between the media and beauty enhancement repurchasing is mediated by trust. The rationale is that the media content reinforces the patients' trust in the attributes of the doctor, and subsequently, they might consider the attributes of the doctor as providing the greatest importance in repurchasing the beauty product/service (Abraham et al., 2011; Cialdini, 2018). These findings support the previous marketing literature that has emphasized the role of the media to retain existing customers (Chiu et al, 2005; Lin & Sun, 2009; Seewan & Benjarongkij, 2013). Thus, this research highlights the important role of the media and trust relationship in influencing the repurchasing decision of patients attending cosmetic clinics.

Implications

Theoretical implications

Based on this study findings, this research provides interesting insights for researchers regarding the different streams of marketing literature. Firstly, this study highlights the significant role of the media that influences a patient's repurchasing decision. The proposed conceptual framework was tested and consequently analyzed in different settings. The media's persuasiveness is the most representative element that patients take into account when they consider beauty enhancement repurchasing. Therefore, this research advances previous literature by reporting on specific evidence explaining how the advertising media's characteristics influence a patient's beauty repurchasing decision.

Secondly, the current research contributes to the existing knowledge base by examining the mediating role of trust regarding the relationship between the media and the beauty enhancement repurchasing decision. The media enhances the patient's trust in the doctor, and subsequently, trust in the doctor enhances the patient's repurchasing decision because they believe in the doctor's competence and honesty. In other words, the patient's trust in the doctor is a key factor that strengthens the relationship between the media and the repurchase of beauty enhancement services. Thus, this research has investigated and reported on the important role of the media and the trust factor influencing the patients' repurchasing decision.

Managerial implications

Since patients make their purchase decision based on the advertising context, the practitioners need to understand the importance of the patients' viewpoint. This research adds evidence for cosmetic clinic managers that to focus on the patients' beauty repurchasing decision they need to concentrate on the influencing factors of the media. Firstly, the clinics should pay attention to and be aware of the content in the media; namely, they should communicate, for instance, factual, up-to-date, and reasonable messages to their patients. In this sense, the managers must develop the media content, thereby improving the usefulness of the media platforms, by providing updated and qualified information. Secondly,

people are bombarded with a large amount of media content from all the clinics nowadays, such that the patients may perceive negatively or take things for granted, which consequently affects their intention to revisit a particular clinic. Thus, cosmetic clinics should take extra care regarding the advertising content they provide, in order to avoid information overload or any misinterpretation. Thirdly, the doctors should provide more personalized information for the patients, such as the most appropriate treatment for each individual, and how to recover from any discomfort after the treatment, in order to enable the patient to feel satisfied with the doctor; resulting in repurchasing and greater loyalty to the clinic. This makes business owners gain more sales from the existing patients. Finally, the managers should take the patients' trust into account, and design precise media content in their marketing strategies and advertising campaigns that is adapted to the patients' preferences.

Limitations and Recommendation

This study has certain limitations that should be addressed by future research. Firstly, this study relies on cross-sectional data, i.e. a short time period to examine the relationship between the research constructs. However, it is difficult to establish the causal association using cross-sectional data; therefore, it is recommended that future research should examine the relationship using data collected over a longer period of time. Secondly, this research has relied on convenience sampling due to resource and time constraints. Future research should include a larger sample for better generalizability of the findings. Thirdly, the findings may not cover the overall picture of the antecedents and the outcome of the variables in this study; only two influencing factors, media and trust, were the focus. Therefore, further study should emphasize the other relevant factors, such as the patients' satisfaction towards trust (Krot & Rudawska, 2017; Platonova, Kennedy, & Shewchuk, 2008) as well as the repurchasing intention regarding beauty enhancement.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest.

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