航空公司永續行銷對關係品質與顧客忠誠度的影響

The Effects of Airline's Sustainable Marketing on Relationship Quality and Customer Loyalty

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摘要

隨著人類發展與大環境變遷，能源不足、資源缺乏等問題促使永續議題益發受重視。航空界本身跨國跨產業的特性成為各國政府積極支持永續發展並提升其附加價值的主因，對於航空公司而言，面對資源、成本與競爭，如何在永續、獲利與回饋之間尋得平衡，則是當前首重的課題。本研究欲以商業行銷的角度切入，先探討永續行銷、關係品質、顧客忠誠度三者本身的定義與範圍，後檢驗彼此之間的關係及影響程度。研究結果顯示，航空公司永續行銷（包括綠色行銷與社會行銷）對於關係品質有顯著影響，且關係品質能夠正向提升顧客忠誠度。本研究從而結論並提出利於企業制定策略的方針，以祈航空產業達到永續發展的願景。

關鍵字：永續行銷、信任、滿意、承諾、顧客忠誠度。

Abstract

In the progress of human development and environmental transition, scarcity of natural recourse is one the major sustainability topic nowadays. As for airline industry, considering the structure of industry, product and service provided among countries, it is facing huge difficulties of recourse scarcity, rising cost, and fierce competition. How to poise between sustainable development, maximum profit, and contributing to society has become a priority issue in airline industry. Hence, this study, with respect of marketing, intends to clarify the definition of sustainable marketing, relationship quality, customer loyalty, and explore the relationship among the three in airline industry. According to results, this study provides an integrated framework as suggestions for airline companies, in order to achieve the vision of sustainable development someday.

Keywords: Sustainable Marketing, Trust, Satisfaction, Commitment, and Customer loyalty

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I. Introduction

Business and marketing are inseparable concepts.   Recent years, some studies had showed by implementing strategies related to sustainable marketing, such as societal marketing (Dos Santos, 2009), green marketing (Peattie, 1992), and corporate social responsibility (Carroll, 1991), may help companies run a better outcome.   By the needs of resource preservation, community integration, long-term business operation, and considering the structure of airline industry, product and service provided among countries, they have high responsibility to set up standards and come up with best practice of sustainable marketing. In order to promote enterprise image and recognition from customer, airline companies regards sustainability as duty to operate.

However, previous studies were mainly focus on the definition of sustainable business, influence to environment, theoretical hypothesis on consumer attitude.   Researches in airline industry usually highlighted on single construct.   Sustainable marketing in airline industry is still in the initial stage of academic research.   Due to the complexity of this subject, it's important to look at sustainable development in a holistic way that approaches the issue rationally.   Therefore, the motivation for this study is to understand the construction of sustainable marketing and aimed to examine the effects of airline's sustainable marketing on relationship quality and customer loyalty, and the relationship among them.

II. Literature Review

2.1 Sustainable Marketing

This study basically followed the definition proposed by Fuller (1999), who defined sustainable marketing as the progress of planning, implementing, and controlling the development, pricing, promotion, and distribution of products that satisfies the following three criteria: customer needs are met, organization goals are attained, and the process is compatible with ecosystems.   In addition, this study will also take the theory of "triple bottom line" (Elkington, 1997) into consideration, then define sustainable business into three constructs: profit (economic marketing), people (social marketing), and planet (green marketing). However, form customer's perspective, economic marketing doesn't have significant effect on sustainable marketing, this study will thus focus on the latter 2 constructs: Green Marketing and Social Marketing.   Green marketing is efforts by organizations to produce, promote, package, and reclaim products in a manner that it is sensitive or responsive to ecological concerns. Social marketing operates in a manner that meets or exceeds the ethical, legal, commercial and public expectations that society has of business.

2.2 Relationship Quality

Relationship quality deal with an interpersonal relationship, defining quality as a set of intangible values that brings expected exchanges between a buyer and a seller and that increases product sales (Levitt 1986). Relationship quality is described as a higher-order construct with several distinct but related dimensions: Trust, Satisfaction, and Commitment.

2.3 Customer Loyalty

Generally speaking, customer loyalty means the intention of repurchasing products and services, which would be one of the priorities of any company.   This study will use following indicators for measuring customer loyalty: a) the intention and behavior of frequent repurchase, b) the intention and behavior of purchasing other products or services from the company, c) the intention and behavior of recommending to others, and d) the immunity to the promotional activities of competitors.   Previous researches (Ruyter et al. 2001, Bettencourt 1997) showed that relationship quality is one of the most important elements to influence customer loyalty.

2.4 Theory Model and Hypothesis

This study intends to understand the influence of sustainable marketing, relationship quality and customer loyalty in airline industry, and confirm the relationships among sustainable marketing, relationship quality, and customer loyalty.   Based on theories review, hypotheses of this study are purposed and listed below; the research framework are shown in figure 2-1

H1a: Green marketing has a positive effect on Trust in airline industry.

H1b: Social marketing has a positive effect on Trust in airline industry.

H2a: Trust has a positive effect on Commitment in airline industry.

H2b: Trust has a positive effect on Satisfaction in airline industry.

H2c: Satisfaction has a positive effect on Commitment in airline industry.

H3: Commitment has a positive effect on Customer Loyalty in the airline industry.
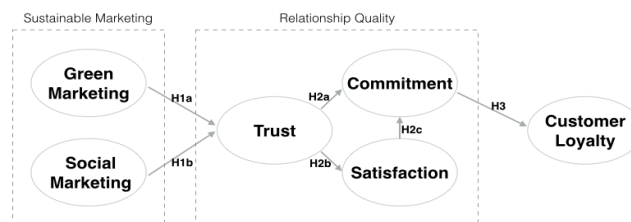

Figure 2-1 Research Framework

III. Research Method

3.1 Measurements and Questionnaire

3.1.1 Operational Variance Definition and Measurement

The focus of this study is mainly on the role of sustainable marketing. According to the literature review and research framework of this study, this section would give the definition for 6 variables. The variables include Green Marketing, Social Marketing, Trust, Satisfaction, Commitment, and Customer Loyalty. The definitions of all constructs are shown in Table 3-1, and measuring variables are displayed in Table 4-2 as followed:

Table 3-1 Definitions of research constructs

Construct		Definition
Sustainable Marketing	Green Marketing	It is efforts by organizations to produce, promote, package, and reclaim products in a manner that it is sensitive or responsive to ecological concerns.
	Social Marketing	Operating a business marketing in a manner that meets or exceeds the ethical, legal, commercial and public expectations that society has of business.
Relationship Quality	Trust	The degree of customers' reliance on the credibility and benevolence of the airline.
	Satisfaction	The degree of satisfaction with the past interactive experience.
	Commitment	The degree of customers' reliance on the credibility and benevolence of the airline.
Customer Loyalty		Customers are willing to purchase again, to recommend to others, and to refuse competitors.

3.1.2 Questionnaire Design

This study relies on paper-based questionnaire survey. The questionnaire is designed and divided into 6 segments, in a total of 46 questions. In the first and last segments include 11 personal questions (5 questions for flying experiences, and 6 questions for background collection). Second part has 8 questions related to green marketing; the third part embodied 12 social marketing questions; while the fourth sector combines 12 questions of trust, satisfaction, with commitment. The fifth section holds for customer loyalty (3 questions). The above latter 4 segments are all adopts the five-point Likert's scale to measure the variables. The five-point scale ranges from "Strongly Agree" as 5 points to "Strongly Disagree" as 1 point.

3.2 Data Collection

Data will be collected by convenience sampling method, and mainly analyzed by Structural Equation Model (SEM). The surveyor will randomly choose participants at Taoyuan International Airport in Taiwan. The estimated number of data is 400.

3.3 Analysis

This study will be analyzed by Descriptive Statistic, Reliability Analysis, and Structural Equation Model (SEM). SEM includes Confirmatory Factor Analysis, and Path Analysis. This study will test the model fitness, reliability analysis and validity analysis to ensure research

validity and reliability.

IV. Result

4.1 Sample Structure and Descriptive Statistics

4.1.1 Sample Structure

The surveys of this research based on paper-based questionnaires. A total of 426 questionnaires were distributed for this research; 364 copies are validated. The sample structure is shown in Table 4-1. Most respondents (93.7%) had more then one-time experience in taking flight; the larger part (74.7%) of flying purpose was traveling. Most commonly flying route of respondents were northeast Asia (54.1%) and southeast Asia (35.7%), frequency of flying lied in once a half year to once a year (42%). 51.4% of respondents were taken China Airline most commonly, while 47.8% chose Eva Airline. Majority of the respondents were 21-40 years old (74.2%). 54.9% of the respondents were female. Most respondents graduated from college (71.7%). 48.4% of the respondents worked as general occupations. 77.5% of the respondents lived in northern Taiwan. 50 % of the respondents earned NTD 30,001-60,000 a month.

4.2 Reliability and Validity Analysis

4.2.1 Reliability

This research assessed the reliability by calculating Cronbach's α shown as Table 4-1. Reliability estimates of each construct were 0.886, 0.945, 0.766, 0.910, 0.906, and 0.900. All of them exceeded 0.70, which indicates a good reliability of this research.

Table 4-1 Reliability Statistics

Latent Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Latent Variable	Cronbach's Alpha
Green Marketing	0.886	Trust	0.91
Social Marketing	0.945	Satisfaction	0.906
Customer Loyalty	0.766	Commitment	0.9

4.2.1 Validity

The questionnaire was constructed from previous studies. Hence, this research should demonstrate high content validity. This study used chi-square differences to examine the discriminant validity of this measurement model. In Table 4-2, there is significant difference of the value of chi-square when setting the correlation coefficient between each construct as 1, which means the data represents good discriminant validity of this research.

Table 4-2 Discriminant Validity

Constructs		Unrestricted		Restricted		Δchi-square	
		Chi-square	df	Chi-square	df		
Green marketing	Social Marketing	152.7	53	353.7	54	201	***
	Trust	144.0	53	1183.4	54	1039.4	***
	Satisfaction	148.2	53	960.6	54	812.4	***
	Commitment	147.1	53	889.0	54	741.9	***
	Customer Loyalty	142.5	43	462.5	44	320	***
Social Marketing	Trust	67.5	19	760.1	20	692.6	***
	Satisfaction	75.7	19	718.2	20	642.5	***
	Commitment	64.3	19	649.3	20	585	***
	Customer Loyalty	79.3	13	260.5	14	181.2	***
Trust	Satisfaction	173.0	19	492.2	20	319.2	***
	Commitment	116.2	19	556.1	20	439.9	***
	Customer Loyalty	91.1	13	246.1	14	155	***
Satisfaction	Commitment	97.1	19	224.5	20	127.4	***
	Customer Loyalty	42.7	13	130.1	14	87.4	***
Commitment	Customer Loyalty	63.6	13	158.2	14	94.6	***

4.3 Confirmatory Factor Analysis

4.3.1 Initial Measurement Model

Confirmatory factor analysis is primarily used to validate or to confirm the attribute of parameters in the factor analysis or the number of factors involved. There are 6 latent variables presented in the model in this research: Green Marketing, Social marketing, Trust, Satisfaction, Commitment, and Customer Loyalty. Independent variables and dependent variable in this study were drawn as follow:
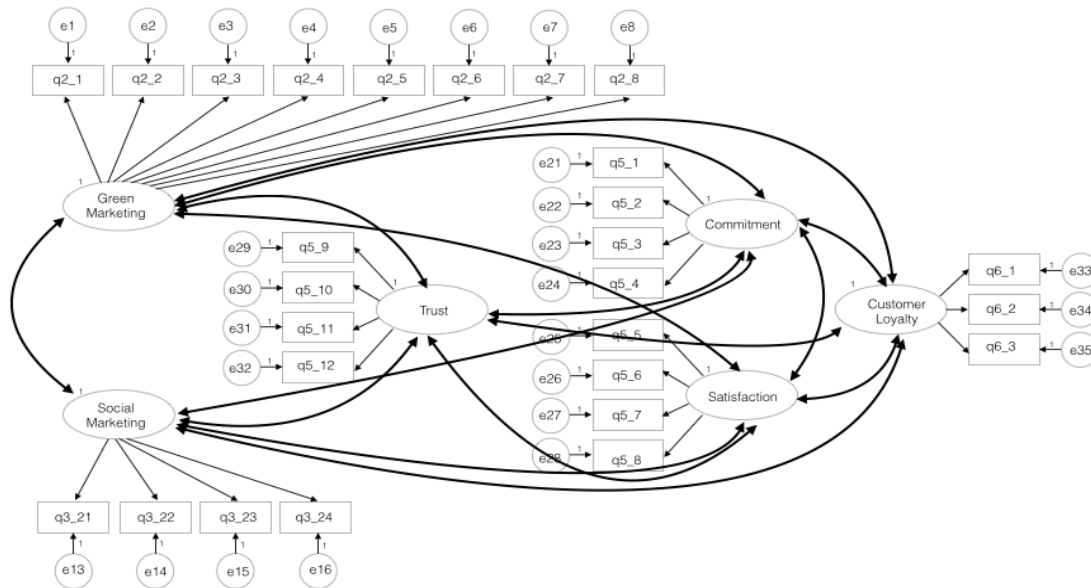

Figure 4-2 Initial Measurement Model

Results of the initial measurement model are shown in Table 錯誤! 所指定的樣式的文字不存在文件中。-3 as M0. Among all the values, RMR, SRMR, NNFI, and CFI are within range "good"; CMIN/DF is smaller than 5; RMSEA is smaller than 0.08, which are within range "reasonable"; while GFI and AGFI are not greater than 0.9, which indicate the variables in M0 measurement model need to be adjusted.

Table 4-3 Result of Measurement Model Fitness Indices

Fitness indices	CMIN/DF	GFI	AGFI	RMR	SRMR	RMSEA	NFI	NNFI	CFI
Recommended standard	< 5, reasonable; < 2, good	> 0.9, good	> 0.9, good	< 0.05, good	< 0.08, good	< 0.08, reasonable; < 0.05, good	> 0.9, good	> 0.9, good	> 0.9, good
M0	2.670	0.850	0.817	0.035	0.062	0.068	0.896	0.923	0.932
M1	2.315	0.873	0.844	0.033	0.054	0.060	0.913	0.941	0.948
M2	2.200	0.883	0.854	0.025	0.046	0.057	0.922	0.949	0.956
M3	2.109	0.892	0.864	0.020	0.040	0.055	0.931	0.956	0.962
M4	2.017	0.903	0.876	0.019	0.036	0.053	0.937	0.961	0.967

4.3.2 Four times modification

According to Table 4-3, after four times modification, the value of GFI, AFI, AGFI, NFI, NNFI, and CFI were all increased. GFI was raised to 0.903, which become within range of "good". AGFI was raised to 0.876, become within range of "acceptable." CMIN/DF, RMR, SRMR, and RMSEA were all decreased to standard. Overall, the indices M4 shows the acceptable fitness of measurement model after four times modifications.

4.3.3 Analysis of Measurement Model

This study uses standardized factor loading as the evaluation index as shown in Table 4-4. It is evident that the standardized factor loadings for all indices have reached the significance level (exceeded 0.5). Thus, all indices have sufficient convergent validity. All constructs exhibit excellent composite reliability (> 0.5). The variance extracted estimates for each construct variable is greater than 0.5. Therefore, both reliability and validity can be assessed statistically in this research.

Table 4-4 Analysis of Measurement Model

		Standardized factor loading	t-value		Composite reliability	Variance extracted estimates
Green Marketing					0.899	0.564
	q2_1	0.701	14.922	***	0.491	
	q2_3	0.667	13.976	***	0.445	
	q2_4	0.745	16.230	***	0.555	
	q2_5	0.847	19.647	***	0.717	

	q2_6	0.857	20.044	***	0.734	
	q2_7	0.570	11.472	***	0.325	
	q2_8	0.826	18.895	***	0.682	
Social Marketing					0.894	0.738
	q3_22	0.890	21.144	***	0.792	
	q3_23	0.871	19.340	***	0.759	
	q3_24	0.814	18.384	***	0.663	
Trust					0.943	0.847
	q5_10	0.900	21.932	***	0.810	
	q5_11	0.938	23.554	***	0.880	
	q5_12	0.922	22.855	***	0.850	
Satisfactions					0.907	0.708
	q5_5	0.853	19.937	***	0.728	
	q5_6	0.794	17.846	***	0.630	
	q5_7	0.856	20.054	***	0.733	
	q5_8	0.862	20.256	***	0.743	
Commitment					0.904	0.702
	q5_1	0.824	18.852	***	0.679	
	q5_2	0.817	18.600	***	0.667	
	q5_3	0.899	21.661	***	0.808	
	q5_4	0.809	18.316	***	0.654	
Customer Loyalty					0.845	0.731
	q6_2	0.856	19.340	***	0.733	
	q6_3	0.854	19.270	***	0.729	

Note: *indicates *t*-test has reached the significance level of p<0.05

4.4 Path Analysis

4.4.1 Over-identified and Offending Estimate

From Table 4-5, the number of distinct sample moments is higher than the number of distinct parameters to be estimated.　It proved that this study is over-identified.

Table 4-5 Computation of Degrees of Freedom

Number of distinct sample moments	276
Number of distinct parameters to be estimated	53
Degrees of freedom (276 - 53)	223

From Table 4-6, all the variances estimates were positive.　From Table 4-7, all the standardized regression weights were smaller than 0.95.　It showed there are no offending estimates in this study, and also allowed us moving to next section.

Table 4-6 Variances

	Estimate	S.E.
Green Marketing	.506	0.051
Social Marketing	.398	0.038
d1	.263	0.023
d2	.150	0.017
d3	.092	0.013
d4	.102	0.016
e1	.288	0.023

Table 4-7 Standardized Regression Weights

			Estimate
Trust	<---	Green Marketing	0.083
Trust	<---	Social Marketing	0.366
Satisfaction	<---	Trust	0.755
Commitment	<---	Trust	0.111
Commitment	<---	Satisfaction	0.807
Customer Loyalty	<---	Commitment	0.849
q2_1	<---	Green Marketing	0.701

e3	.350	0.028	q2_3	<---	Green Marketing	0.667
e4	.319	0.026	q2_4	<---	Green Marketing	0.745
e5	.173	0.016	q2_5	<---	Green Marketing	0.847
e6	.184	0.018	q2_6	<---	Green Marketing	0.857
e7	.359	0.028	q2_7	<---	Green Marketing	0.57
e8	.183	0.016	q2_8	<---	Green Marketing	0.826
e32	.060	0.007	q5_12	<---	Trust	0.922
e31	.045	0.006	q5_11	<---	Trust	0.937
e30	.073	0.007	q5_10	<---	Trust	0.9
e21	.136	0.012	q5_1	<---	Commitment	0.833
e22	.178	0.015	q5_2	<---	Commitment	0.809
e23	.130	0.013	q5_3	<---	Commitment	0.882
e24	.251	0.021	q5_4	<---	Commitment	0.794
e25	.130	0.012	q5_5	<---	Satisfaction	0.853
e26	.155	0.013	q5_6	<---	Satisfaction	0.798
e27	.106	0.01	q5_7	<---	Satisfaction	0.856
e28	.124	0.012	q5_8	<---	Satisfaction	0.859
e16	.154	0.014	q3_24	<---	Social Marketing	0.813
e15	.121	0.013	q3_23	<---	Social Marketing	0.87
e14	.101	0.012	q3_22	<---	Social Marketing	0.893
e34	.121	0.016	q6_2	<---	Customer Loyalty	0.867
e35	.108	0.013	q6_3	<---	Customer Loyalty	0.843

4.4.2 Goodness of Fit and result of path analysis

In path analysis, a distinction is made between endogenous variables and exogenous variables. There are 4 endogenous variables (Trust, Satisfaction, Commitment, and Customer Loyalty) and 2 exogenous variables (Green Marketing and Social Marketing) in this study.

The ratio of CMIN/DF was 2.28, which was smaller than 5. In addition, CFI = 0.957, GFI = 0.887, AGFI = 0.861, NFI = 0.927 and NNFI = 0.951. They all exceeded or were close to 0.9. Results for RMR = 0.036, RMSEA =0.059, SRMR = 0.0679.

The result of path analysis of research model is shown as Table 4-8 and Figure 4-3. As it indicates, 5 hypothesis of this research are tested verified. In sustainable marketing aspect, the standardized path coefficients of "H2b: Social marketing has a positive effect on Trust in the airline industry" is 0.366, which signifies social marketing has good influence on trusting airline industry. While the standardized path coefficients of "H1a: Green marketing has a positive effect on Trust in the airline industry" is 0.083, which means green marketing has a lower infection on trust in the airline industry.

In relationship quality area, the standardized path coefficients of "H2b: Trust has a positive effect on Satisfaction in airline industry" is 0.755, which indicates great effect of trust on satisfaction in airline industry. The standardized path coefficients of "H2a: Trust has a positive effect on Commitment in airline industry" and "H2c: Satisfaction has a positive effect on Commitment in airline industry" are 0.111 and 0.807, which imply that in the airline industry, satisfaction has a greater effect than trust on commitment. The standardized path coefficients

of "H3: Commitment has a positive effect on Customer Loyalty in the airline industry" is 0.849, which shows commitment has a positive effect on Customer Loyalty in the airline industry.

Table 4-8 Path Analysis of Research Model

	Standardized path coefficients	t-value		R^2
Trust				0.192
Green Marketing (H1a)	0.083	0.735		
Social Marketing (H1b)	0.366	3.192	***	
Satisfaction				0.570
Trust (H2b)	0.755	15.884	***	
Commitment				0.798
Trust (H2a)	0.111	2.017	***	
Satisfaction (H2c)	0.807	12.639	***	
Customer Loyalty				0.721
Commitment (H3)	0.849	17.061	***	

Note: *indicates t-test has reached the significance level of p<0.05

Based on the hypothesis of this research, "H1a: Green marketing has a positive effect on Trust in the airline industry" is invalid, considering the standardized path coefficients is 0.083, and p-value had not achieved significant value. Possible reasons are the green marketing performances weren't implemented thorough enough, or it did not reveal in depth concept of sustainability for customer to understand. Customer might thus disagree to some green marketing performances by cause of lacking knowledge of environmental policy such as using latest aircraft to improve energy efficiency and carbon reduction.
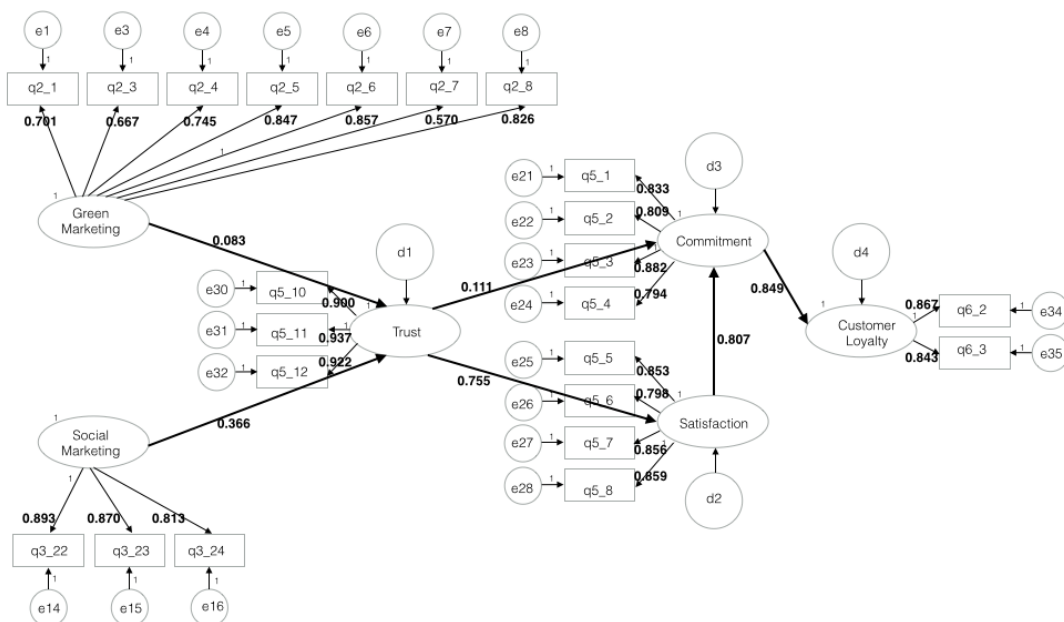

Figure 4-2 Path diagram

V. Conclusion and Discussion

5.1 Conclusion

This study shows the correlation between sustainable marketing, relationship and customer loyalty.　With SEM model, we have confirmed the relationships among 6 variables through the causal paths of 6 hypotheses and 5 of them have been supported.　Following are conclusions summarized from this research:

1) The positive effect of Social Marketing on Trust has also been proven (H1b has been supported).　When people perceive the higher level of social marketing performance, such as providing safety environment, complying with international treaty, participating with charity activities, respecting and protecting consumer privacy, the more agreeably they are to believe in credibility on airlines.

2) Trust also has been proven to have a positive effect on Commitment (H2a has been supported).　According to this study, the degree of trusting in airline's service will positively affect users to maintain the relationship with airlines.

3) The result of this study also shows that Trust has a positive effect on Satisfaction (H2b has been supported).　When people have more confidence in airline's behavior, the more gratifications they get.

4) Satisfaction has a positive effect on Commitment (H2c has been supported).　The higher degree of customer enjoying taking the airlines, the more willingly they are to have longtime connection with the airlines.

5) The positive effects of Commitment on Customer Loyalty have been proven (H3 have been supported).　It is obvious that when people care about the correlation with airlines, the more willingly they are to pay for services or recommending friends.

5.2 Managerial Implication

Sustainable marketing has become a pervasive trend especially in large-scale enterprises. Airlines should definitely advocate sustainable marketing as long-term business strategy.　Not only for good points of ecological concerns, it is proven that when customer are awarded of airline's care for passenger safety, human rights, labor standards, social charity, they are more

willing to give positive evaluations of the company. In other words, as long as airlines keep promoting sustainable marketing, boosting up benefits of sustainable knowledge, it will not only earn a better enterprise image and recognition from customer, but also bring in repurchase directly.

Following international conventions such as 10 principles of UN global compact and OECD principles of corporate governance might get a practical framework for airline companies performing sustainable business. Participants will have a platform to adopt an established and global recognized policy for development. Also, have the opportunity to advance sustainability solutions with business linkage.

5.3 Limitation and Suggestion

Some limitations in this study should be mentioned. First, simple descriptions in questionnaire might not detail enough for respondents to decide theirs agreements. Second, green marketing performances weren't implemented thorough enough, or it did not reveal in depth concept of sustainability for customer to understand. Customer might thus disagree to some green marketing performances by cause of lacking knowledge of environmental policy such as using latest aircraft to improve energy efficiency and carbon reduction. Third, in the scenarios did not mention negative examples, which might have lead to a one-sided opinion. This study suggests future researchers include both positive and negative scenarios so that respondents may start from a better even baseline. Last, this research only focused on Taiwanese national airlines those that have international route. It might cause respondents lacking choices to give actually experience of theirs mostly taken airlines.

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