

HOW DO RELATIONSHIP MARKETING ACTIVITIES CONTRIBUTE TO CUSTOMER CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOR IN THE CONTEXT OF CROSS-BORDER E-COMMERCE?

ZHENFENG CHENG¹, XIN CHEN^{2,*} AND XUSHENG CUI³

¹Business School
Guangzhou College of Technology and Business
No. 5, Haibu Guangming Road, Shiling Town, Huadu District, Guangzhou 510850, P. R. China
chengzf@gzgs.edu.cn

²College of Landscape Architecture and Tourism
Hebei Agricultural University
No. 289, Lingyusi Street, Baoding 071001, P. R. China

*Corresponding author: ylchx@hebau.edu.cn

³College of Engineering
Yantai Nanshan University
No. 12, Daxue Road, Donghai Tourism Holiday Resort, Longkou City, Yantai 265713, P. R. China
331301073@qq.com

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ABSTRACT. *As a new transaction mode, cross-border e-commerce is expanding rapidly around the world, creating huge opportunities for global economic development. However, faced with many international brands, various uncertain factors and lack of international brands perception make it difficult for customers to generate high brand identity and brand support behavior. Such of being the case, how to deepen the enterprise-customer relationship by carrying out relationship marketing activities has become an important issue for enterprises to obtain sustainable competitive advantages. This study establishes a mediation model based on customer perceived value in the context of cross-border e-commerce, and explores the mechanism of financial, social and structural relationship marketing activities on customer citizenship behavior (CCB). An empirical test is conducted on a sample of 485 customers involved in cross-border e-commerce. The results show that non-financial relationship marketing activities such as social and structural relationship marketing activities positively affect CCB, while financial relationship marketing activities have no significant impact on CCB. Customer perceived value mediates the relationship between financial, social, and structural relationship marketing activities and CCB. These findings not only provide a useful supplement to the research on the association between relationship marketing activities and CCB at the theoretical level, but also provide scientific support for the formulation of cross-border e-commerce relationship marketing strategies and the effective allocation of resources at the practical level.*
Keywords: Cross-border e-commerce, Relationship marketing activities, Customer perceived value, Customer citizenship behavior

1. **Introduction.** Cross-border e-commerce, as a new type of transaction mode, is expanding rapidly around the world, creating huge opportunities for global economic development [1]. At present, China has become the world's largest cross-border e-commerce buyer and destination country [2]. In recent years, the huge demand of Chinese customers for overseas brands has stimulated the rapid development of cross-border e-commerce in China. In light of this, cross-border e-commerce platforms continue to carry out various

relationship marketing activities to further attract customers. However, various uncertain factors and lack of international brands perception make it difficult for customers to generate high brand identity and brand support behavior. Therefore, how to deepen the enterprise-customers relationship by carrying out relationship marketing activities has become an important issue for enterprises to obtain sustainable competitive advantages.

In the face of the increasing status and importance of customers, the former purely self-centered relationship marketing strategy has become ineffective. Even if many enterprises invest huge human, material and financial resources in relationship marketing activities, it is difficult to achieve the expected results. This has caused confusion in the industry and triggered new thinking in the industry and even academia, that is, how can relationship marketing activities be more effective? The key to solving this problem is to change from the traditional product-oriented logic to the customer-oriented logic, taking the customers as the core participants in the process of product design or service. In other words, relationship marketing activities are most effective only when they effectively stimulate customers' voluntary civic behaviors that are beneficial to the enterprise [3]. Such voluntary altruistic behavior is called customer citizenship behavior (CCB) [4]. As a voluntary out-of-role behavior, CCB can positively promote customer satisfaction, the establishment of long-term enterprise-customer relationship, the improvement of organizational performance, and strengthen customers' sense of belonging [5-7]. Therefore, a large number of studies have investigated the influencing mechanism of CCB. Bove et al. [8] found that trustworthiness and benevolence of service employees can stimulate CCB through direct and indirect paths. Xie et al. [9] pointed out that brand experience is an important factor driving CCB. Assiouras et al. [7] found that participating in value co-creation can help stimulate CCB. However, little literature focuses on the effect of relationship marketing activities on CCB. And whether CCB is applicable in the context of cross-border e-commerce has become an important issue worthy of academic attention. At present, most of the existing literature on CCB has focused on the catering service industry, aviation service industry, hotel service industry [10], and there is still a lack of research on the acting mechanism of CCB in cross-border e-commerce. Therefore, How to inspire CCB through relationship marketing activities, becomes an important problem and challenge for cross-border e-commerce.

However, in the face of the current situation of weak customer citizenship awareness and lack of CCB in the field of cross-border e-commerce, it is impossible to achieve ideal utility and effectiveness by simply applying the relevant theories of relationship marketing to stimulating CCB. Some scholars [11] pointed out that only by stimulating CCB based on customers' perceived value can enterprises obtain sustainable competitive advantage. In other words, only by truly understanding the problems faced by customers from the standpoint of customers, and truly creating value for customers, can cross-border e-commerce marketing activities more effectively stimulate customers' continuous purchase behavior and achieve the establishment of long-term customer relationships. However, previous literature reviews have not conducted empirical research combining relationship marketing activity strategy with customer citizenship behavior theory and perceived value theory. In view of this, this study empirically examines the mediating effect of destination reputation and destination identification between destination social responsibility and tourist citizenship behavior.

To sum up, this study intends to empirically analyze how cross-border e-commerce relationship marketing activities affect CCB, and focus on exploring the mediating effect of customer perceived value between the relationship of the relationship marketing activities and CCB in the context of cross-border e-commerce scenarios. The framework of this study is as follows. Firstly, the value of the study is put forward through introduction

section. Secondly, the research hypothesis is proposed based on the review of existing literature. Thirdly, questionnaire design and data collection are carried out. An empirical analysis is made based on the collected valid data. And the implications are proposed on the basis of the results. Finally, conclusions, and future research prospects are presented in this study.

2. Theoretical Foundation and Hypotheses.

2.1. Relationship marketing activities and customer citizenship behavior. Relationship marketing activities are a general term for a series of strategic activities for enterprises to strengthen long-term stable relationships with customers through interaction with customers [12,13]. The implementation of relationship marketing activities can improve customer loyalty, which has a positive impact on the long-term competitive advantage of enterprises [14]. Regarding the main components of relationship marketing activities, different scholars have put forward different explanations. Gruen et al. [15] pointed out that relationship marketing activities can be divided into communication, customer relationship orientation, physical conditions and facilities, and professionalism of employees. Most of the previous studies on the classification of relationship marketing activities generally divide them into three categories: financial, social, and structural relationship marketing activities [16]. Therefore, this study will take the above three strategic activities as the main components of the relationship marketing activities to conduct empirical research.

The concept of customer citizenship behavior (CCB) is inherent in the essential connotation of organizational citizenship behavior. Groth [4] extended and applied the organizational citizenship behavior framework to the consumer field. As a voluntary action of customers, CCB not only promotes the interaction between customers and enterprise, but also has a positive impact on the long-term development of the organization and customers [17]. CCB can effectively promote the improvement of service quality through customers' feedback behaviors, which is conducive to the sustainable development of enterprises [6,18].

According to the social exchange theory, individuals will perform specific behaviors for the other party based on the value created by the other party for themselves [19]. In other words, individuals need to give back to the benefits that have been obtained in order to continue to gain the relational benefits. Some studies have explained the mechanism of CCB based on social exchange theory, and achieved certain results [20]. Specifically, cross-border e-commerce platforms provide customers with a variety of relationship marketing activities, and the transfer of this value is an important motivation for customers to give back to the enterprise. In addition, many previous studies on relationship marketing pointed out that the stable relationship between enterprises and customers formed by relationship marketing activities can effectively stimulate CCB [16]. The interaction between enterprises and consumers and the economic compensation provided to consumers have a positive correlation with good word-of-mouth, feedback behavior and customer loyalty [21]. In addition, some scholars [22,23] pointed out that the diversified relationship marketing activities provided by enterprises can effectively stimulate the generation of customers' spontaneous and voluntary action intentions, which is ultimately conducive to the realization of sustainable development of enterprises. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed in this study.

H1. Financial relationship marketing activities positively impact customer citizenship behavior.

H2. Social relationship marketing activities positively impact customer citizenship behavior.

H3. Structural relationship marketing activities positively impact customer citizenship behavior.

2.2. The mediating role of customer perceived value. Customer perceived value is a comprehensive value evaluation made by customers on the perceived benefit and perceived cost of a product or service [24]. The perceived benefits from a product or service include emotional value and functional value, while the cost of the product or service includes monetary costs represented by money and non-monetary costs represented by time [25]. Customer perceived value is generally considered to be a multidimensional concept. Sheth et al. [26] proposed five dimensions, namely functional value, social value, emotional value, cognitive value and situational value. The contribution of this dimension division lies in its practicality and simplicity, making it easier for people to understand the connotation of customer perceived value. Sweeney and Soutar [27] further divided functional value into two sub-dimensions: quality factor and price factor [28]. Perceived value reveals customers' overall evaluation of products and services from a cognitive perspective. Taking perceived value as a mediator to reveal the influencing mechanism of relationship marketing activities on CCB emphasizes the role of cognitive path.

According to the stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R) model, the environment, as an external stimulus, will have an impact on individual behavior by affecting organic response (internal state) [29], revealing that the internal psychological state plays a mediating role in the relationship between external stimuli and behavioral responses. In this study, the relationship marketing activities provided by cross-border e-commerce can act as environmental stimuli, thereby affecting the customer's internal psychological state (perceived value), and ultimately producing CCB (behavioral responses) that are beneficial to the development of the enterprise. In addition, some studies have confirmed the mediating role of perceived value between external environmental stimuli and customer behavioral intentions [11,18]. Based on this, the following hypotheses are proposed.

H4. Customer perceived value mediates the influence of financial relationship marketing activities on customer citizenship behavior.

H5. Customer perceived value mediates the influence of social relationship marketing activities on customer citizenship behavior.

H6. Customer perceived value mediates the influence of structural relationship marketing activities on customer citizenship behavior.

The research model underlying influences of relationship marketing activities on CCB via customer perceived value is depicted in Figure 1. The CCB construct is incorporated into the theoretical model as the outcome variable to capture the effect of relationship marketing activities. Customer perceived value is proposed as mediator for the association between relationship marketing activities and CCB.

3. Methodology.

3.1. Variable measurements. Financial relationship marketing activities were assessed with three items adopted from Palmatier et al. [16]. The specific items are: This service provider often offers discounted prices to customers; This service provider provides corresponding points service and coupon policy for customers; This service provider often gives small gifts to customers. A three-item scale, developed by Palmatier et al. [16] and Peltier and Westfall [30], was applied to measuring the social relationship marketing activities. The specific items are: This service provider cares about customers very much

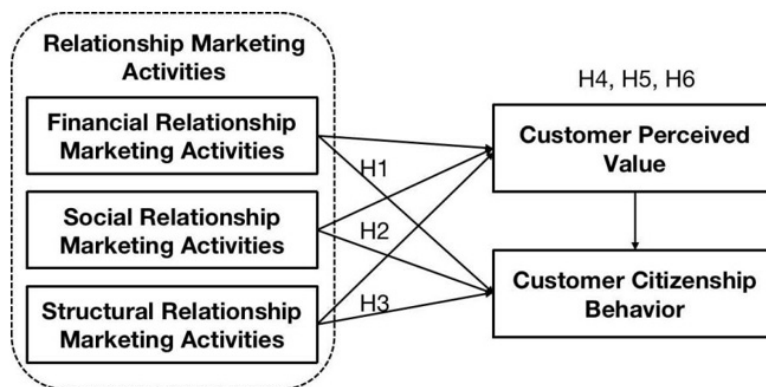


FIGURE 1. The proposed model

and provides personalized service to them; This service provider can accept the opinions of customers humbly; This service provider can timely deal with the problems that customers have in the process of receiving services. Structural relationship marketing activities were evaluated by means of three items adopted from Palmatier et al. [16] and Choi and Cheon [31]. The specific items are: This service provider provides customers with convenience services such as electronic order processing systems; This service provider provides customers with convenient and fast payment methods; This service provider focuses on customer needs and has a complete service process. The customer perceived value scale comprised three measurement items mainly adapted from Deng et al. [32]. The specific items are: The products provided by this service provider are relatively cost-effective; This service provider fulfills my needs well; I feel good when I use this service provider. To measure customer citizenship behavior, three scale items were adapted from Balaji [33]. The specific items are: I will make some suggestions to improve the product or service to this service provider; I will positively promote this service provider to others; I will recommend this service provider to others. Likert's 7-point response options were applied to every scale ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 7 (completely agree).

Since the scale items were originally compiled in English, the back-translation method [34] was applied to identifying any content or wording errors. Two bilingual specialists and two professional translators are responsible for translation, cross-checking, and back-translation of the translated version. A pilot test was conducted with 80 customers with cross-border e-commerce experience. Further revisions to the questionnaire were conducted based on the pilot test results.

3.2. Data collection and sample. The data collection was carried out from 1 October 2021 to 20 November 2021, and the survey objects are people with shopping experience through cross-border e-commerce platforms. A total of 700 questionnaires were distributed and 596 were retrieved. The questionnaires with more blank items or the same numbers were excluded, and finally 485 valid questionnaires were obtained.

Among the valid survey samples, males accounted for 43.8% and females accounted for 56.2%; the age groups were concentrated in 21-30 and 31-40, accounting for 38.1% and 31.8% respectively, indicating that customers in this age group have certain willingness to try a new model of cross-border shopping; 82.7% have an average monthly income of more than 4,000 CNY; in terms of education level, the survey samples with a higher education level were mainly selected, with junior college and bachelor education accounting for 68.9% and master's degree education and above accounting for 20.8%.

4. Results and Implications.

4.1. Measurement model. Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted in this study. It was found that the measurement model had a good fit with the data ($\chi^2 = 88.711$ (DF = 80), $\chi^2/DF = 1.109$ (< 3), GFI = 0.977 (> 0.9), AGFI = 0.965 (> 0.9), NFI = 0.979 (> 0.9), SRMR (standardized root mean square residual) = 0.021 (< 0.08), RMSEA (root mean square error of approximation) = 0.015 (< 0.08)). Cronbach's α coefficients were used to measure internal consistency between scale items. The results in Table 1 showed the Cronbach's α values of each construct ranged from 0.822 to 0.883, all above the cut-off value of 0.6. This demonstrates good reliability of measurement tools in our study.

TABLE 1. Measurement model results

Constructs	Items	Sig. test of estimated parameters				Item reliability		Construct reliability		Convergent validity
		Unstd.	S.E.	z-value	p	Std.	SMC	Cronbach's α	CR	AVE
Financial relationship marketing activities	FIRMA1	1.000				0.715	0.511	0.822	0.823	0.608
	FIRMA2	1.165	0.078	14.899	***	0.802	0.643			
	FIRMA3	1.225	0.082	14.968	***	0.819	0.671			
Social relationship marketing activities	SORMA1	1.000				0.824	0.679	0.866	0.868	0.686
	SORMA2	0.989	0.050	19.832	***	0.845	0.714			
	SORMA3	1.008	0.052	19.260	***	0.816	0.666			
Structural relationship marketing activities	STRMA1	1.000				0.800	0.640	0.867	0.867	0.686
	STRMA2	1.134	0.061	18.683	***	0.813	0.661			
	STRMA3	1.212	0.062	19.561	***	0.870	0.757			
Customer perceived value	CPV1	1.000				0.826	0.682	0.876	0.876	0.702
	CPV2	1.014	0.049	20.864	***	0.847	0.717			
	CPV3	0.979	0.047	20.693	***	0.840	0.706			
Customer citizenship behavior	CCB1	1.000				0.854	0.729	0.883	0.883	0.715
	CCB2	0.988	0.046	21.525	***	0.825	0.681			
	CCB3	1.065	0.047	22.644	***	0.858	0.736			

Note. ***: $p < 0.001$.

Convergent validity was evaluated by the contribution of scale items to their corresponding constructs. As shown in Table 1, the standardized factor loadings of all items ranged from 0.715 to 0.870, an acceptable range. The composite reliability (CR) range of all constructs was 0.823~0.883, exceeding the threshold value of 0.7. Additionally, the average variance extracted (AVE) range of all constructs was 0.608~0.715 and greater than the threshold value of 0.5, indicating that all measurement items maintained sufficient convergent validity.

As indicated in Table 2, the square root of AVE of each construct was higher than the correlations between these constructs, showing good discriminant validity of all the constructs.

4.2. Structural model. The model fitting indicators for the structural model ($\chi^2 = 88.711$ (DF = 80), $\chi^2/DF = 1.109$ (< 3), GFI = 0.977 (> 0.9), AGFI = 0.965 (> 0.9), NFI = 0.979 (> 0.9), SRMR = 0.021 (< 0.08), RMSEA = 0.015 (< 0.08)) showed that the structural model fit the data well. The results of the structural model test are shown in Table 3. The effects of social relationship marketing activities ($\beta = 0.209$, $p < 0.001$), structural relationship marketing activities ($\beta = 0.239$, $p < 0.001$) on CCB were all positive and significant; thus, H2 and H3 were supported. However, the path coefficient from financial relationship marketing activities to CCB ($\beta = 0.056$, $p > 0.005$) was not significant; thus, H1 was not supported.

As shown in Table 3, the indirect effect of customer perceived value was significant between financial relationship marketing activities and CCB ($\beta = 0.163$, BC 95% CI =

TABLE 2. Discriminant validity results

	FIRMA	SORMA	STRMA	CPV	CCB
FIRMA	0.780				
SORMA	0.247	0.828			
STRMA	0.306	0.320	0.828		
CPV	0.387	0.497	0.389	0.838	
CCB	0.360	0.552	0.498	0.671	0.846

Note. The on-diagonal entries in bold are square roots of AVE; off-diagonal entries represent Pearson correlation estimates; FIRMA: financial relationship marketing activities; SORMA: social relationship marketing activities; STRMA: structural relationship marketing activities; CPV: customer perceived value; CCB: customer citizenship behavior.

TABLE 3. Direct, and indirect effects results

Paths	Estimate	Product of coefficients		Bootstrapping			
				Bias-corrected 95% CI		Percentile 95% CI	
				S.E.	z-value	Lower	Upper
Indirect effects							
FIRMA → CCB	0.163	0.042	3.881***	0.084	0.252	0.085	0.253
SORMA → CCB	0.184	0.030	6.133***	0.131	0.249	0.129	0.246
STRMA → CCB	0.111	0.030	3.700***	0.058	0.175	0.055	0.173
Direct effects							
FIRMA → CCB	0.056	0.067	0.836	-0.080	0.186	-0.077	0.190
SORMA → CCB	0.209	0.043	4.860***	0.125	0.295	0.123	0.293
STRMA → CCB	0.239	0.046	5.196***	0.148	0.330	0.150	0.332

Note. 5000 bootstrap samples; ***: $p < 0.001$.

[0.084, 0.252]), providing support for H4. Likewise, bootstrap analysis results showed that customer perceived value had a significant indirect impact between social relationship marketing activities and CCB ($\beta = 0.184$, BC 95% CI = [0.131, 0.249]); thus, H5 was supported. Furthermore, the indirect effect of customer perceived value was significant between structural relationship marketing activities and CCB ($\beta = 0.111$, BC 95% CI = [0.058, 0.175]), providing support for H6.

4.3. Theoretical implications. The conclusions of this study have important theoretical significance. First, this study is no longer limited to exploring the relationship between relationship marketing activities and CCB from an integrated perspective, but selects three types of financial, social and structural relationship marketing activities that are well suited to the cross-border e-commerce context to explore its relationship with CCB, which not only expands the theoretical system of relationship marketing activities, but also provides empirical evidence for the theoretical discussion of the “relationship marketing activities – CCB” path.

Second, most of the previous studies on citizenship behavior were limited to organizational theory, but this study incorporates citizenship behavior into customer behavior theory, and mainly focuses on the field of cross-border e-commerce. It not only explains the acting mechanism of citizenship behavior from a new perspective, but also provides a useful supplement to the theoretical system of CCB.

Third, this study applies customer perceived value as a mediating variable to verifying the relationship between cross-border e-commerce relationship marketing activities and

CCB, exploring the transmission mechanism from relationship marketing activities to CCB, and further enriching and deepening the research on the formation mechanism of CCB. The research conclusions not only provide a new perspective for understanding the relationship between relationship marketing activities and CCB, but also have important reference value for subsequent related research.

4.4. Managerial implications. First, when planning relationship marketing activities, cross-border e-commerce should make efforts in non-financial relationship marketing activities, such as interacting with consumers, providing personalized services and good operating systems, rather than investing a lot of energy and resources in financial relationship marketing activities, such as price concessions and subsidies. This is because the emotional bond and strong relationship established through non-financial relationship marketing activities can more effectively induce CCB that is beneficial to the development of the enterprise.

Second, cross-border e-commerce should carry out a series of relationship marketing activities that can stimulate customer perceived value, such as providing price concessions, interacting with consumers, and helping consumers make purchasing decisions. And strengthen the trust relationship, create more functional and hedonic value, and then prompt customers to voluntarily strive to maintain the corporate brand image and generate continuous purchase behavior.

Third, the research results can guide cross-border e-commerce managers to change the traditional way of thinking, and jointly promote the sustainable development of enterprises based on the perspective of co-creation. Specifically, cross-border e-commerce managers should change their development concepts, create a customer-participative development model, design relationship marketing activities with strong interaction with customers, and create a co-creation mechanism for customers from design concepts to practical implementation, effectively stimulating CCB that is beneficial to the development of the enterprise.

5. Conclusions and Future Research Prospects.

5.1. Conclusions. Focusing on cross-border e-commerce, this study empirically examines the relationship among relationship marketing activities, customer perceived value, and CCB. The research conclusions are as follows.

First of all, the results show that non-financial relationship marketing activities such as social relationship marketing activities and structural relationship marketing activities have a positive impact on CCB. However, the financial relationship marketing activities related to price and economic preferential that enterprises have always been keen on have no significant direct impact on CCB. Although this result is unexpected, it is also in line with the changes in modern lifestyles, consumption attitudes and consumption patterns, indicating that modern customers no longer only pay attention to the preferential economic compensation as before, but pay more attention to the interaction and emotional connection with enterprises.

Second, customer perceived value plays a mediating role between financial, social and structural relationship marketing activities and CCB. It can be seen from the foregoing that the direct impact of financial relationship marketing activities on CCB is not significant, but it can indirectly have a positive impact on CCB by affecting customer perceived value.

5.2. Limitations and future research direction. First, the sample data has been collected in the way of self-report, which is highly subjective. Therefore, future research should consider using a variety of ways to collect data to improve the scientific nature of measurement tools. Second, this study only explores the mediating mechanism of cross-border e-commerce relationship marketing activities on CCB, without taking account of the influence of cross-border e-commerce shopping times. Future studies should include the number of shopping times into research framework, and explore the boundary conditions of the impact of relationship marketing activities on CCB.

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Author Biography



Zhenfeng Cheng holds a Ph.D. in business administration from Daejeon University, Korea, in 2018, and is Professor of Marketing in the Business School of Guangzhou College of Technology and Business. His research interests are related to digital strategy and experimental simulation of micro behavior. He has published more than 30 papers in scholarly journals.



Xin Chen obtained the Ph.D. degree in business administration from Daejeon University, Korea, in 2018. She is currently working at College of Landscape Architecture and Tourism, Hebei Agricultural University, China. Her research interests are consumer behavior, service marketing and digital marketing. She has published more than 20 papers on well-known journals.



Xusheng Cui is a B.Sc. candidate at College of Engineering, Yantai Nanshan University, China. His major research interests include social media marketing and customer experience.