



PRIMARY RESEARCH

Positive emotions as underlying mechanism between customer gratitude and behavioural intentions

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Abstract

Based on the growing importance of customer emotions like gratitude in the organizational literature, the current study is focused on finding out the underlying mechanisms through which customers' gratitude leverage the benefits to the service providers in the form of positive behaviors. Employing the reasoning of "broaden and build a theory of positive emotions," a customer emotion versus behaviors model has been developed and tested in order to assess the mediation of customers' delight and overall satisfaction in parallel with each other among the association of customer gratitude and behavioral outcomes (positive word of mouth and revisit intentions). This research is conducted in the context of Pakistan's mega shopping malls. Based on the quota sampling method, a cross-sectional research design has been used to obtain data ($N = 352$) from shoppers. Using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) analysis, our results specify that among two parallel mediators, the links of customer gratitude with both outcomes have been mediated by overall customer satisfaction; in comparison, customers' delight only intermediates the association of customer gratitude with revisit intentions. This study opens up a new side in the customer gratitude literature by finding the predictive differences in the parallel mediatory mechanism of customer's delight and overall satisfaction.

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INTRODUCTION

In today's world retail industry has been regarded as one of the most important industries (Pattarakitham, 2015). Customers of all regions tend to shop at the places where they find some recreational and pleasing activities along with buying of products (El-Adly & Eid, 2016).

In almost all business sectors including shopping malls, customer retention is becoming prime focus, and this can only be done by facilitating the customers in multiple ways (El-Adly & Eid, 2016; Recamadas, 2018). Therefore, the places which provides more entertainment, and create more value to the customers are considered to be more value driven and result into satisfied and loyal customers (El-Adly & Eid, 2016). This led to increase attention on keeping into con-

sideration main aspects of shopping areas (Jackson, Stoel, & Brantley, 2011). Keeping in view that mega shopping malls are more value driven than smaller markets and stores, in most of the researches being conducted in context of shopping malls, the influence of customer's emotions on their attitudes and behaviours, received less attention (Jackson et al., 2011; Rahman, Wong, & Yu, 2016). Trade industry especially in shopping mall context is flourishing continuously. In Pakistan, trade developers are focusing in construction of new multi-purpose shopping malls, e.g., Dolmen Mall, Clifton, Karachi, The Mall of Lahore, Olympus Shopping Mall, Islamabad, Safa Gold Mall Islamabad, The Centaurus Mall Islamabad etc. and many more imminent ventures are in progress with new advancements and styles.

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Marketing scholars highlighted many times the dominating role of consumers' emotions in decision making related to purchases of products and hiring of services (Bagozzi, Gopinath, & Nyer, 1999; Gaur, Herjanto, & Makkar, 2014; Ladhari, Souiden, & Dufour, 2017) but behavioural responses as consequences of customer's emotions are not much focused in available literature (El-Adly & Eid, 2016). Also, Gaur et al. (2014) stated that, although marketing researchers have started to address important concerns related to customer emotions (Ladhari et al., 2017), yet we know very little about how actually emotions are relevant in marketing domain.

In organizational literature, importance of consumers' emotions like gratitude is evolving gradually (Hasan, Lings, Neale, & Mortimer, 2014; Palmatier, Jarvis, Bechhoff, & Kardes, 2009; Raggio, Walz, Godbole, & Folse, 2014; Wartika, Surendro, Satramihardja, & Supriana, 2015). Though, Hasan et al. (2014) explained the intertwining part of customer gratitude in relationship between "perceived relationship marketing investment" and "the perceived value of the relationship with the organization", but the mechanisms through which gratitude leverages these organizational benefits were not explained and need to be explored (Fazal-e Hasan, Lings, Mortimer, & Neale, 2017). In response to these calls, customers' emotions of delight and overall satisfaction are proposed as relational mediators between gratitude and behavioural outcomes. As in business sector, there is a scope available for exploring the impact of delight and satisfaction of consumers on their loyalty intentions and behaviours (Ma, Scott, Gao, & Ding, 2017). In this research, customer delight and overall satisfaction are studied as positive emotions, and this research respond to the call of Meyer, Barnes, and Friend (2017), to find out the predictive differences between the two constructs (Ma et al., 2017), as we examined their parallel mediating effect in order to identify their consequences. Delight being an important emotion is sometimes defined as a composite side of satisfaction (Fullerton & Taylor, 2002; Ngobo, 1999). In contrast, Finn (2012) argued that delight and satisfaction are not same, these are two distinct emotions with differential impacts on individuals thought and action process. Another cause of confusion is the inconsistency linked with the conceptualization of satisfaction either as an attitude "making an evaluative assessment of an item, good or service" (Pearce & Packer, 2013), or an emotion as a result of some inducements (Ma et al., 2017; Oliver, 1980). Bock, Folse, and Black (2016) conducted a detailed review and revealed a pattern related to conceptualization of gratitude, as a state and as an emotion.

Since its conception, among different measures applied for gratitude, Smith (1976), defined gratitude "as an emotional sentiment which almost immediately and directly prompts us to reward". In this study we defined gratitude in line with Emmons and McCullough (2003) as a pleasant emotion stemming from the perception of positive subjective effects. This research study builds on "broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions (Fredrickson, 1998, 2001)" to outspread the prevailing literature available on customer emotions like gratitude, overall satisfaction, delight, and behavioural outcomes.

As broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions (Fredrickson, 1998, 2001) elucidates that how positive emotions accumulates and compounds with the passage of time, crafting a coping mechanism resulting into an upward spiral that further explain the involvement of other positive emotions, subsequently leading to positive behaviours. It aims to clarify that what triggers customers to be satisfied and delighted and at what extent; also, which emotions out of these two is more predictive of customer responses.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Relationship of Customer Gratitude with Emotions and Behavioural Outcomes

"Broaden-and-build theory of emotions (Fredrickson, 1998, 2001)" elucidates the means through which emotions (negative and positive) lead to intentions to behave. As the theory posits that "positive emotions broaden people's momentary thought-action repertoires, widening the array of the thoughts and actions that come to mind" (Fredrickson, 2004b), thus, it is proposed that a chain of upward spiral will be generated by broadening and accumulation of feelings of positive emotions and that will result into other positive emotions making people to encounter long term good feelings (Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002) which in turn results into positive behaviours (Fredrickson, 2004a). Literature contends that complex emotions like delight arises when different first order emotions increase and accumulate over time (Plutchik, 1980). In the same line of reasoning (Fazal-e Hasan et al., 2017) argued that emotions of gratitude impact other positive emotions i.e. overall satisfaction. Researchers have clearly argued and taken overall satisfaction as an emotional state (Ali, Kim, & Ryu, 2016; Reza, Rusidah, & Forasidah, 2017). Based on "broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions (Fredrickson, 1998, 2001)" we posit that customers' gratitude may enhance instant feelings and actions building lasting physical, intellectual and psychological resources and resulting into broader feelings of other emotions like delight and overall satisfaction. On the basis

of above arguments, we thus hypothesize that:

H1: Customer gratitude is positively related to Positive Word of Mouth (PWOM).

H2: Customer gratitude is positively related to revisit intentions.

H3: Customer gratitude is positively related to customer delight.

H4: Customer gratitude is positively related to customer overall satisfaction.

Relationship of Customer Delight and Behavioural Outcomes

Past researches (Oliver, Rust, & Varki, 1997) indicate that outraging or delighting patrons may result into a strong tendency of positive behaviours (Schneider & Bowen, 1999). Similarly, Bartl, Gouthier, and Lenker (2013) reported the influence of delight on constructive consequences like “intentions to behave”. Therefore, based on these studies and “broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions (Fredrickson, 1998, 2001)” it is projected that positive emotions results into positive behaviours. For instance, delight will broaden the thought-action range of the consumers by generating a desire of speaking about their positive experiences and revisiting the same shopping mall based on the delightful experiences. Thus, it is hypothesized that:

H5: Customer delight is positively related to PWOM.

H6: Customer delight is positively related to revisit intentions.

Relationship of Customer Overall Satisfaction and Behavioural Outcomes

It is evident from the past literature that customers’ satisfaction significantly influences their behavioural intentions (Ali et al., 2016; Lam, Chan, Fong, & Lo, 2011; Ryu, Lee, & Kim, 2012). Based on “broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions (Fredrickson, 1998, 2001)” the customers’ thought-action range can be broadened by feelings of overall satisfaction, crafting a desire of revisiting the mall and to speak positively about their experience because of their positive experience and feelings of gratefulness. Thus, it is hypothesized that:

H7: Customer overall satisfaction is positively related to PWOM.

H8: Customer overall satisfaction is positively related to revisit intentions.

Mediation of Customer Delight between the association of Customer Gratitude and Outcomes

In order to find out the appraisal patterns’ impact on revisit intentions, Ma et al. (2017) reported that customers’ de-

light intercedes the association of “unexpectedness”, “goal importance”, and “goal interest” with intentions to revisit and elucidated that in marketing domain, customer delight is a most debatable topic. Despite this literature very scant studies have actually examined mediating role of customer delight in marketing contexts (Ma et al., 2017). According to “broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions (Fredrickson, 1998, 2001)” customers’ feelings of gratitude will accumulate and compound and will turn into broader feelings of delight with the passage of time. This keeps spiral of positive emotions active and in turn result in positive behavioural actions i.e., revisit intentions and PWOM. Thus, we proposed that:

H9: The association between customer gratitude and PWOM is mediated by customer delight.

H10: The association between customer gratitude and customers’ intentions to revisit is mediated by customer delight.

Mediation of Customer Overall Satisfaction between the association of Customer Gratitude and Outcomes

In previous years, studies on satisfaction described that positive relationship of “perceived service quality” and satisfaction of the customers with the organizations resulting into loyalty intentions (intentions to recommend and revisit intentions); thus, providing initial evidence of confirmation of mediatory role of satisfaction between these variables (Chen & Tsai, 2008; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). This study uniquely assesses role of overall satisfaction of customers visiting shopping malls, as mediators between customers’ gratitude and outcomes i.e., PWOM and intentions to revisit the shopping malls. On the basis of “broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions (Fredrickson, 1998, 2001)”, we proposed that among customers visiting mega shopping malls, positive emotions of overall satisfaction will stem from high feelings of gratefulness and their thought-action range would further be broadened by this satisfaction creating desire of positive behaviours in them. Therefore, we hypothesized:

H11: The association between customer gratitude and PWOM is mediated by Customer overall satisfaction.

H12: The association between customer gratitude and customers’ intentions to revisit is mediated by Customer overall satisfaction.

Figure 1 below shows a mediation model whereby Customer Gratitude leads to PWOM and Revisit Intentions through Customer Delight and Customer Satisfaction.

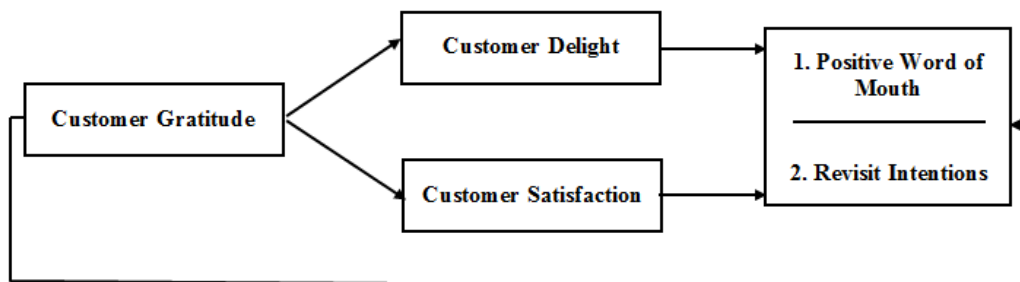


FIGURE 1. Research model

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Participants and Procedures

The current study applied cross-sectional research design whereby data was collected in a natural environment through survey method from all respondents in a single point of time. As current study is directed in milieu of Pakistan's shopping malls, therefore, participants of the study are the customers visiting the large shopping malls in Rawalpindi and Islamabad i.e., Olympus Shopping Mall, Centaurus Mall and Safa Gold Mall. We used quota sampling technique for data collection. The quota was based on age factor in which, it was assured that 25% respondents belonged to each specified age group. On the basis of existing evidence (Rosenbaum, Otolara, & Ramírez, 2016), four age groups were created that are: 18–25 years, 26–35 years, 36–45 years, and 46 and older. The questionnaires were self-administered and consumers were directly contacted who visited the shopping malls. Total 450 customers were contacted for data collection who filled up the questionnaires. Out of these 352 complete questionnaires were retrieved thus yielding the total sample size of 352 with response rate of 78%.

Measures

Seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree was used for the measurement of all items of customers' gratitude, satisfaction, PWOM and revisit intentions. Whereas, Customer delight was measured with Seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = always to 7 = never. A 3-items scale had been used to measure customer gratitude and was adapted from McCullough, Emmons, and Tsang (2002). Sample items include: "I feel grateful for providing us with such malls in Pakistan". A 4-items scale had been used to measure customer delight and was adapted from Oliver et al. (1997). Sample items include: "I feel delighted whenever I visit this mall". In current study. A 3-item scale had been used to measure customer overall satisfaction and was adapted from Laroche, Babin, Lee, Kim, and Griffin (2005). Sample items include: "I am satisfied with

my decision to shop at the mall". A 3-item scale had been used to measure positive word of mouth and was adapted from Laroche et al. (2005). Sample items include: "I will say positive things about this shopping mall to other people". A 3-item scale had been used to measure customers' revisit intentions and was adapted from Palmatier, Dant, and Grewal (2007). Sample items include: "For my next visit, I will consider this mall as my first choice".

Pilot Study

Based on the adaption of the scale from various sources and the first time testing of the study constructs in a unique combination it is recommended to verify the scale with a pilot study (Naqshbandi, 2016). Therefore, we conducted a pilot study by collecting data from 50 respondents visiting the mega shopping malls in Pakistan. There were two reasons to execute the pilot testing, first was to confirm that respondents can easily understand the questioner developed for the survey purpose and second was to check the validity and reliability of the measures used. After performing analysis on the data extracted from pilot study a strong support for the questionnaire item's factorization according to theory was established along with good values for Chronbach's α ($> .85$) for all the constructs, specifying the reliability of the measures used (Hair et al., 2006).

RESULTS

Respondents Profile

Before moving to main analysis, frequency test was used to identify and remove missing data and to correct wrong entries. The study participants varied considerably in their age groups, gender and other demographics. All the respondents were above 18 years age. Out of total 352, 24.7% respondents were employees, 19.9% were students, 33.8% were self-employed, 3.1% were retired personals. There were 63.6% females and 47.7% males. Out of these females 18.5% were house wives. In education, 46.4% respondents were post-graduate or above and 53.6% were graduate or below.

Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Correlations

Table 1 demonstrates the values of means, SDs' (standard deviations), Cronbach's alpha and correlations of the study constructs. The bivariate correlation reveals a positive association of customers' gratitude with delight ($r = .59, p < .01$), customer overall satisfaction ($r = .57, p < .01$), revisit intentions ($r = .29, p < .01$), and positive word of mouth ($r = .54, p < .01$). Similarly, there is a strong positive association

of customer delight, with customers' overall satisfaction ($r = .41, p < .01$), positive word of mouth ($r = .37, p < .01$), and revisit intentions ($r = .31, p < .01$). Customers' overall satisfaction has a significant positive correlation with positive word of mouth ($r = .61, p < .01$), and revisit intentions ($r = .46, p < .01$). Likewise, positive word of mouth has a strong positive correlation with revisit intentions ($r = .63, p < .01$).

TABLE 1. Means, standard deviations, correlations, and reliabilities

Sr. No.	Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1	Gratitude	5.18	1.69	(.89)				
2	Delight	4.84	1.47	.59**	(.90)			
3	Overall Satisfaction	4.96	1.53	.57**	.41**	(.85)		
4	PWOM	4.90	1.66	.54**	.37**	.61**	(.90)	
5	Intentions to Revisit	4.99	1.69	.29**	.31**	.46**	.63**	(.90)

Note. N=352; ** $p < 0.01$, "Cronbach's alpha" are described in parenthesis

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), Convergent and Discriminant Validity

In order to check that indicator variable actually belong to their respective latent variable we conducted an EFA using Principal Component Analysis as "the extraction method" along with rotation method of Varimax with "Kaiser Normalization". Five latent constructs i.e., customer gratitude,

customer satisfaction, customer delight, positive word of mouth and revisit intentions appeared representing the authenticity of the measures used with overall 72.55% variance explained and the measure of adequacy of the sampling "KMO" (Kaiser Meyer Olkin) also appeared to be in an acceptable range at 0.88, with significant "Bartlett's test of sphericity" at $p < 0.001$ and chi square value of 4622.97.

TABLE 2. Factor loadings, reliability and validity

Variables and Items	Factor Loadings					AVE	CR	Cronbach's α
	1	2	3	4	5			
Customer Gratitude						.645	.844	0.891
GRA1	0.831							
GRA2	0.794							
GRA3	0.784							
Customer Satisfaction						.610	.820	0.900
SAT1		0.701						
SAT2		0.871						
SAT3		0.760						
Customer Delight						.681	.897	.850
CDEL1			.713					
CDEL 2			.901					
CDEL 3			.879					
CDEL 4			.810					
PWOM						.605	.822	.901
PWOM1				0.845				
PWOM 2				0.788				
PWOM 3				0.700				
Revisit Intentions						.709	.879	.900
RI1					.782			
RI2					.863			
RI3					.880			

Note: CR, composite reliability; AVE, average variance extracted

Table 2 depicts the factor loadings of all indicator variables with values above 0.70. Similarly, “average variance extracted” AVE for all the latent constructs was above 0.50 and Composite Reliabilities (CR) were more than AVE’s for all variables establishing the convergent validity of the variables used in current study (Hair et al., 2006). In addition, Fornell and Larcker (1981) method was applied to establish the “discriminant validity” and it was found that shared variance between different variables was less than the average variance shared in the latent constructs with their respective indicator variable. Furthermore, “Chronbach’s α ” for all the study variables was greater than 0.70 signifying

the reliability of scales used.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

After performing exploratory factor analysis, a series of CFA using AMOS 22 were conducted to assess the fitness of this structure of the data. Therefore, based on the recommendations of Anderson and Gerbing (1988), 2, 3, 4, and 5-factor models versus 1-factor models for each respective pairing has been evaluated. Out of total 24 probable pairings of the variables, results for 2, 3, 4 and 5 factor models were good as compared to 1-factor models. Table 3 imitates the CFA results of full model (5-factors vs. 1-factor) and mediators and DVs as 2-factor vs. 1-factor model.

TABLE 3. Confirmatory factor analysis results

Measurement Models	χ^2	DF	CFI	GFI	NFI	RMSEA
SAT-DEL (2 Fac.)	32.212	8	.991	.984	.982	.052
SAT-DEL (1 Fac.)	441.131	10	.734	.754	.730	.354
PWOM-RI (2 Fac.)	12.363	4	.993	.99	.99	.060
PWOM-RI (1 Fac.)	118.015	4	.821	.871	.810	.295
GRAT-SAT-DEL-PWOM-RI (5Fac)	198.103	68	.970	.935	.961	.051
GRAT-SAT-DEL-PWOM-RI (1Fac)	1277.716	74	.744	.705	.736	.227

Measurement Model (Full CFA Model)

CFA was conducted in order to test and validate the full measurement model composed of 5 variables. Our findings recommend that the theorized five-factor model adequately fits the data ($\chi^2 = 198.103$, $df = 68$, CFI = .970, GFI = .935,

NFI = .961, RMSEA = .051). Thus, full measurement model was reinforced. The full CFA model also showed that the factor loadings for each item of the respective variables were above .07. The factor loadings for each item of respective constructs are presented in Figure 2.

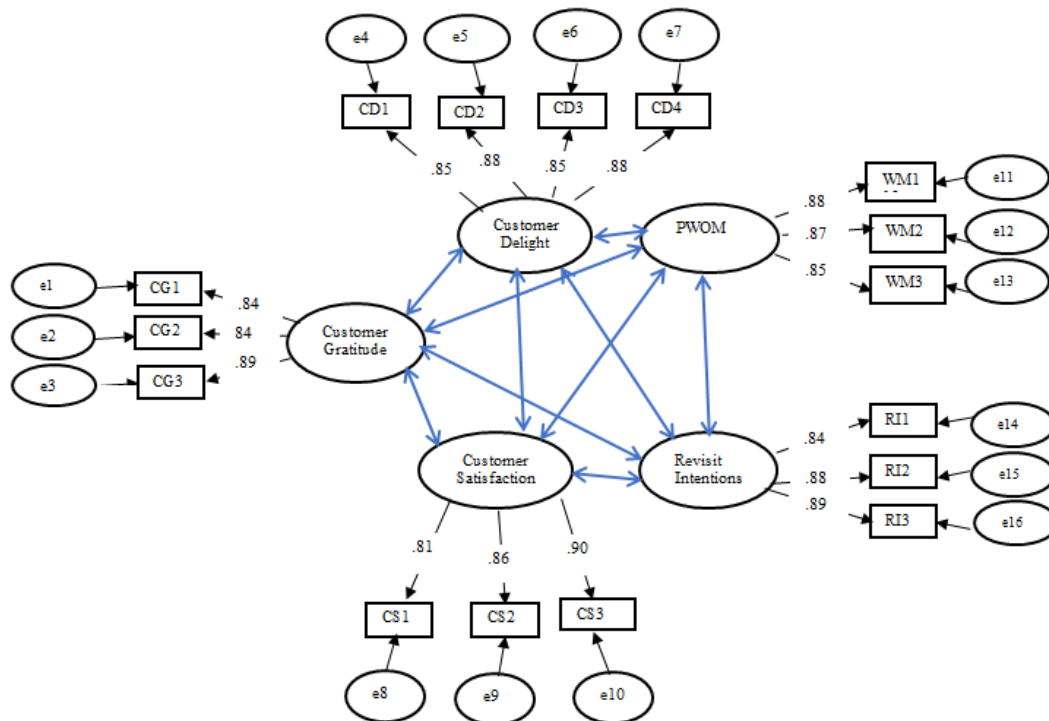


FIGURE 2. Full measurement model of customers’ delight and overall satisfaction as parallel mediators between customer gratitude and behavioural outcomes

Hypothesis Testing

SEM technique was employed using AMOS 20 in order to test our direct and mediation hypotheses. SEM is a statistical technique helping the researchers to analyse and verify a series of structural paths i.e. regression equations (Byrne, 2013). Based on the results of CFA, the direct and mediation hypotheses of the study were analysed using the structural modelling technique. For validating our mediation hypotheses, the bootstrapping technique was used for testing indirect effects because of its significance in verifying mediation models (Shrout & Bolger, 2002).

SEM Results

After getting an adequate fit for our hypothesized 5-factor measurement model, and eradication of all alternative models, we ran our structural model using SEM technique in order to test our study hypotheses. Our structural model showed good fit for the data ($\chi^2 = 488.06$; $df = 96$; $p < .001$; CFI = .944; GFI=.915; NFI=.912; AGFI = .876 and RMSEA = 0.07). The results are presented in table 4a and 4b for hypotheses testing using SEM, moreover, Figure 3 depicts the standardized path coefficients, their significance and percentage variance.

TABLE 4. Standardized regression weights through SEM

Hyp.	Direct Paths	Estimate	SE	CR
a. Standardized direct path coefficients of proposed links				
H1	Customers' Gratitude → PWOM	.19***	.06	3.28
H2	Customers' Gratitude → Revisit Intentions	-.04	.07	-0.56
H3	Customers' Gratitude → Customers' Delight	.67***	.04	15.87
H4	Customers' Gratitude → Customer Overall Satisfaction	.46***	.04	11.06
H5	Customers' Delight → PWOM	.02	.04	0.43
H6	Customer's Delight → Revisit Intentions	.13**	.05	2.49
H7	Customers' Overall Satisfaction → PWOM	.61***	.07	8.70
H8	Customer's Overall Satisfaction → Revisit Intentions	.48***	.08	5.93

TABLE 4. Continue

Indirect Paths	Bootstrapping		BC 95% CI		
	Indirect Effect	SE	Lower Limit	Upper Limit	
a. Standardized indirect path coefficients of proposed links					
H9	Customer Gratitude → Customer Delight → PWOM	.02	.03	-.06	.11
H10	Customer Gratitude → Customer Delight → Revisit Intentions	.16***	.04	.06	.28
H11	Customer Gratitude → Customer Overall Satisfaction → PWOM	.29***	.04	.20	.41
H12	Customer Gratitude → Customer Overall Satisfaction → Revisit Intentions	.31***	.04	.21	.42

Note: $N = 352$; BC 95% CI= Bootstrap Confidence Intervals. Bootstrap sample size = 2000 *** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$ (PWOM)

H 1, 2, 3 and 4 state a positive relationship of customer gratitude with PWOM, revisit intentions, customer delight and customer overall satisfaction respectively. Our results show that customer gratitude is significant and positively associated with PWOM ($\beta = 0.19$, $p < .001$); customer delight ($\beta = 0.67$, $p < .001$) and customer overall satisfaction ($\beta = 0.46$, $p < .001$) whereas it is not related to revisit intentions ($\beta = -0.04$, $p < n.s.$). Customer gratitude showed 53% variation in positive word of mouth, 36% variation in customer delight and 38% variation in overall customer satisfaction. Hence, H1, 3 and 4 are fully supported and H2 is not supported. H5 and 6 states that customers' delight is positively associated with PWOM and revisit intentions respectively. Results are contrary customer delight is not linked with PWOM ($\beta = 0.02$, $p < n.s.$) whereas customer delight is positively related to revisit intentions ($\beta = 0.13$, $p < 0.01$). H6 and 7 states a positive association of customer overall satisfaction with

PWOM and revisit intentions respectively. Results indicated that customer overall satisfaction is positively linked with both i.e., PWOM ($\beta = 0.61$, $p < 0.001$) and revisit intentions ($\beta = 0.48$, $p < 0.001$). Thus, H6 and 7 was supported.

H 8, 9, 10 and 11 are mediation hypotheses. H8 proposed the mediatory role of customer delight between the relationship of customer gratitude with PWOM. We used bootstrapping technique, and results indicated that the auxiliary effect of customer gratitude on PWOM through customer delight (Indirect Effect = 0.02, $p = n.s.$) was insignificant, ultimately, rejecting H 7. Outcomes were cross checked using the bootstrap Bias Corrected 95% CI representing the resultant zero values (-.06, 0.11). Whereas, H9 proposed the mediatory role of customer delight among the relationship of customers' gratitude and their intentions to revisit. This hypothesized link was supported by the significant findings of the study (Indirect Effect = 0.16, $p <$

.001) and were crosschecked through the bootstrap Bias Corrected 95% CI representing non-zero values (0.06, .28). Hence, H 8 was supported. H10 states that customer overall satisfaction intermediates the relationship between customer gratitude and PWOM. Results indicated that the indirect effects of customer's gratitude on positive word of mouth through customer overall satisfaction (Indirect Effect = 0.29, $p < .001$) were significant. These results were also established through the bootstrap Bias Corrected 95% CI indicating non-zero values (0.20, .41). Thus, we found

full support for H10. Similarly, H11 states the mediatory role of customer overall satisfaction in between the relationship of customers' gratitude and their intentions to revisit. The findings revealed a significant indirect impact of customer gratitude on revisit intentions through customer overall satisfaction (Indirect Effect = 0.31, $p < .001$) which was further validated through the bootstrap Bias Corrected 95% CI which indicating the non-zero values (0.21, .42). Hence, H11 was also supported.

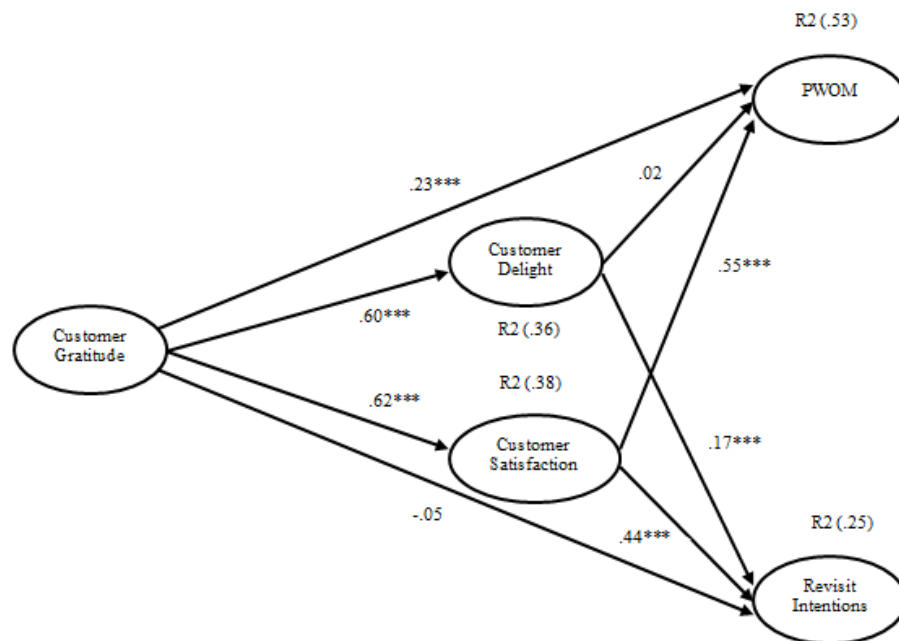


FIGURE 3. Full structural model of customers' delight and overall satisfaction as parallel mediators between customer gratitude and behavioural outcomes

DISCUSSION

Major Findings

In contrast to many past researches which focused on studying "relationship marketing investment" as a predictor of customers' gratitude, this research examined gratitude as a predictor of behavioural outcomes (Fazal-e Hasan et al., 2017) and details about the underlying process through which customers gratitude generates the positive organizational outcomes. Consistent with previous researches (Nawijn & Fricke, 2015; Palmatier et al., 2009), it is found that customers positive emotions of gratefulness results in their positive behavioural intentions. Also, current findings support the association of customers' gratitude with delight in line with Ball and Barnes (2017). Furthermore, current study supports the existing literature (Fazal-e Hasan et al., 2017; Liljander & Strandvik, 1997; Weaven, Baker, & Dant, 2017) that, emotion of gratitude accumulates over time re-

sulting into feelings of overall satisfaction. Likewise, the results of Bartl et al. (2013), our study also supported the effect of customers' delight on their intentions to revisit, but we found no support for the association of customer's delight with PWOM, alike with the findings of Ma et al. (2017). This may be due to "the people who do not attach a special meaning to their (shopping mall) experiences are more likely to generate the positive affect of satisfaction rather than delight when their expectations are met" (Ma et al., 2017). On the other side the relationship of customers' overall satisfaction with PWOM and intentions to revisit the shopping malls as well as banks is proven in current study in line with past literature (Ali et al., 2016; Lam et al., 2011; Pattarakitham, 2015).

Current study checked the intermediating role of customer delight and overall satisfaction between customer gratitude and behavioural outcomes. Findings of the study are in

line with Dutta, Guha, Biswas, and Grewal (2019), and it is inferred that customers' delight intervenes the relationship of customers' gratitude with their intentions to revisit. Consistent with the findings of past researches on satisfaction (Chen & Tsai, 2008; Yoon & Uysal, 2005), in our study it is proved that emotions of overall satisfaction mediate the association of customers' gratitude with their intentions to behave. Finally based on the recommendations of Barnes, Ponder, and Dugar (2011), we tested the underlying mechanism of customers' delight and overall satisfaction in parallel to each other between customer gratitude and behavioural outcomes. We found the strong impact of customer overall satisfaction on behavioural intentions in comparison to delight, that clearly reveals the predictive and mediatory differences between these two constructs, this might be because customers may value the feelings of satisfaction more with the pleasant experiences of shopping malls (Ma et al., 2017). Therefore, we recommend future researchers to conduct the similar study with other outcomes, and in different settings to elaborate the delight and overall satisfaction.

CONCLUSION

This study is established on grounds of "broaden-and-build theory of positive Emotions (Fredrickson, 1998, 2001)" to encompass the prevailing literature on customers emotions and their behaviours to clarify the main triggers behind customers satisfaction and delight and their ultimate positive results which are beneficial for all service providers. This study also provides an insight that how "broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions (Fredrickson, 1998, 2001)" assist to intricate the concept of positive emotions and their behavioural outcomes to elaborate the process of accumulation and compounding of positive emotions over time resulting into a coping mechanism and generation of an upward spiral. Current research is also exclusive in terms of methodology as it is executed in context of developed mega shopping malls of a developing country i.e., Pakistan. This study enables managers to comprehend the benefits received by shopping malls' authorities, when their customers feel grateful, proving that this higher level of gratitude will further strengthen their satisfaction level in lieu of the facilities provided by the malls, ultimately resulting into customers' revisit intentions and generation of positive word of mouth about malls. Therefore, it is suggested that there must be a proper planning while designing the features and services provided by the service providers, in order to keep in consideration, the customers feelings of

gratefulness arising as a priority treatment, further generating the feelings of satisfaction and delight. Customers must recognize that main objective of the authorities is their satisfaction and happiness instead of merely earning profits which may automatically leads towards positive outcomes. Thus, current research opens up new avenues for scholars to examine customer emotions and resulting behaviours in multiple contexts to gain long term benefits and to attain a competitive advantage.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Along with the presence of empirical strengths and distinctive theoretical comprehensions, there are few limitations in current study, which may be addressed in future studies. First of all, because of difficulty to trace and contact the same customers in shopping malls at different time periods, data of the current study is cross-sectional, but, future researchers may apply a longitudinal research design, by collecting data from service industries like banking, multi-nationals and telecom sectors etc., where contacting the same customers is comparatively easy. Secondly, only quantitative method is used in this study, whereas, an experimental design along with quantitative methodology can further be used. Thirdly, in theoretical framework of current study only mediation paths are analysed, whereas, other variables like trust and commitment can be added as moderators, to examine their interaction effects with independent variables on outcomes. Based on "cognitive theory of emotions" (Lazarus, 1991), other variable like "mall environment" can be added in the current framework as independent variable, which may send positive vibes about service provider and their products untimely constructing a relationship of loyalty and trust among customers. Moreover, in order to assess the significance of delight and overall satisfaction in parallel mediation, this framework should be examined in multiple contexts (parks, service industries, and restaurants etc.). Another limitation of current study is lack of support for the mediatory role of customer delight among the association of customers' gratitude and PWOM, because of lack of empirical support of direct effect of customer delight on PWOM. Therefore, to address this limitation, it is recommended that future researchers should examine these links in more detail. In addition, the CFAs results' strong support, tests of convergent and discriminant validity, and strong factor loadings, noticeably specify that the findings of our research are not limited or contaminated by self-reported measures.

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