

# Theoretical Foundations and Conceptual Model for the Arts Consumer Using Satisfaction, Loyalty and Interpersonal Tendencies

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## Abstract

The purpose of this conceptual review is to identify and design a suitable theoretical framework that will help assess the type of loyalty shown by arts' patrons that are satisfied with the service provided, with the mediation of interpersonal tendencies such as opinion leadership and opinion seeking. Four theoretical problems have been identified in the development of this conceptual framework related to the arts consumer constructs: a high correlation between attitudinal constructs like perceived quality, perceived value and satisfaction; the positive and linear relationship between satisfaction and loyalty; the multiple components that integrate the loyalty concept; and the mediating role of interpersonal tendencies such as opinion seeking and opinion leadership. First, we present a brief summary of various contemporary approaches to the study of the following factors: perceived quality, perceived value, satisfaction, loyalty (in its different forms), opinion leadership and opinion seeking. Next, using consumer behavior and relationship marketing studies, an integrated model of satisfaction, loyalty, opinion seeking and opinion leadership is presented.

This literature review contributes to the consumer behavior theory by improving knowledge on the arts management sector with the most significant academic studies. It explains marketing concepts like perceived service, satisfaction, loyalty, opinion leadership and opinion seeking behaviors. The results presented here should encourage further exploration on this stream of research and turn theory into practice. From a managerial perspective, it helps arts managers identify factors and elements that could serve for scale development purposes and questionnaire design. Consideration of these marketing constructs would contribute to preserve the arts venue's relationship with loyal patrons.

**Keywords:** opinion leadership, satisfaction, leisure services, loyalty.

## Introduction. Marketing Constructs with an Impact on Loyalty.

In the past decades, organizations have changed their strategy and orientation with the aim of improving their relationships with their customers. In the seventies, the quality concept was very popular among researchers and managers due to the belief that a product improvement would not only generate higher levels of satisfaction but the cost savings would rise up profitability. In the eighties and nineties, the satisfaction construct was the axis of a firm (and of research studies) as part of their strategy to maintain their actual customer base. Since the financial results of the satisfaction strategies weren't as expected, research in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century in other consumer behavior areas

emerged to find the variable that predicted profitability the most. They showed that higher levels of loyalty had a direct impact on customer profitability. Some research has been performed on the impact between attitudinal factors like quality and satisfaction on customer's loyalty. However, the term "loyalty" remains confusing. Little has been done to examine the specific impact of satisfaction on the different types of loyalty. Some studies measure loyalty considering behavioral and attitudinal loyalty: repetition of purchase, non-switching behavior, word-of-mouth communication and commitment.

The relationship between quality, satisfaction and loyalty has been seen as being perfectly linear and, back in the seventies, part of one single concept. Recently, there has been a major consensus about the differences between perceived quality and satisfaction; however, it is until the end of the nineties when researchers have begun to distinguish the difference between satisfaction and loyalty, constructs that have been perceived as equal [1-4]. The concept of loyalty has gained more popularity among researchers and managers. In recent years, not only researchers have distinguished this difference but it was also affirmed that loyalty is a construct that integrates other behavioral and attitudinal elements.

Four theoretical problems have been identified in the development of a conceptual framework for the arts consumer constructs. The first problem states that there is an expected high correlation between **quality**, **satisfaction** and **value** in the context of a leisure service provided by an arts organization. An arts consumer who wants to enjoy a pleasurable experience with the arts might not consider rational and objective comparisons of the attributes received. This is the case of a leisure service like a theater play, a film, or a performing arts show. Services that fulfill emotional and self-expression needs (like the arts) are entitled to a subjective evaluation and decisions are embodied on holistic perceptions [5]. Affective models show a high multicollinearity effect. Constructs like satisfaction, perceived quality and perceived value have high correlation levels [6]. Arts knowledge and expertise apart, it is difficult for the individual to divide and assess specific service attributes.

The second problem lies in the assumption that there is a perfect linear relationship between **Satisfaction** and **Loyalty**. The belief that high levels of satisfaction lead to increased loyalty among customers has been extensively applied by managers in the form of satisfaction surveys as a base to enhance service quality and increase repetition of purchase indicators (one type of loyalty). Contrary to common belief, some authors state that maintaining high levels of satisfaction does not necessarily keep them loyal or increase market share [7]. From a managerial perspective, satisfaction surveys that are not scientifically designed provide little evidence for predicting return to the service provider [3]. These surveys have also been misinterpreted in the decision making process and, since satisfaction is used to measure a broad range of perceptions that influence the individual's behavior, they are often misused [8]. However, understanding attitudes will help understand how loyalty can be improved and generate value for the organization [9].

The third has to do with the elements that integrate the loyalty construct and the relative importance given to them. Based on the nature of the service offered, **attitudinal loyalty** might be more evident and common in the context of a leisure service. For example, at a performing arts venue, increasing frequency of use to the same show/play might not be as feasible as increasing word-of-mouth ratios to generate new visitors. Similarly, an arts organization should develop high commitment levels so that a visitor will not be easily influenced by competitors. This can validate the hypothesis that, depending on the nature of the service, satisfaction has a different impact on the types of loyalty.

The fourth problem stresses the mediating role of the **opinion seeking** and **opinion leadership** tendencies. That is, the impact that these former behaviors have on the Satisfaction-Loyalty relationship. The decision to attend a Cinema or an arts venue is collective and depends on a high level of interpersonal opinions and decisions. Opinion Seeking and Opinion leadership, for instance might be a greater mediator than satisfaction itself.

## The Arts and Leisure Sectors as Experiential Services

The arts and leisure sector structure is complex in its structure, Slavich [10] identifies three main factors that causes this: new technologies, increasing competition and the emergence of different artistic realities. In an effort to identify opportunities and change the shrinking of audiences' tendency, managers conduct surveys to track audience's perceived quality and satisfaction level. The assumption lies in the expectation that, when a leisure service performs as expected, patrons will be loyal. Traditionally, it has been thought that increasing the quality of a product or service based on the consumer's expectations will increase his satisfaction level; as a result, the higher the score on a satisfaction survey, the more loyal a respondent will be.

Managing leisure services and arts organizations present special characteristics from managing other types of service organizations [6, 11, 12]. We suggest three main aspects that help with this differentiation:

First, from a relationship marketing perspective, a firm should effectively develop and maintain valuable relationships with their stakeholders [13, 14]. In return, each stakeholder provides some value in monetary and non-monetary forms. Although there are cooperating arts organizations, the majority of them has the unique goal of capturing value from target audiences, without encouraging involvement with other stakeholders [15]. They do not have a marketing plan that integrates other art venues, audiences, sponsorship, suppliers, producers, or other publics. They view other art venues as "fierce enemies".

Second, leisure services should be considered as experiential activities. These activities are interactive moments where significant emotions are present [16]; they are the result of something extremely significant and unforgettable [17], they are also a temporal state [18] where the greatest experience is gained through peak moments where there is a sufficient level of challenge, surprise and novelty and this is met with the appropriate expertise from the audience [19, 20]. Wood [21] suggests the following attributes for an experience: involvement, interaction, immersion, intensity, individuality, innovation, and integrity. Experiences create loyalty when the organization connects consumer's similar values, personality types, and enjoyment with non-functional attributes [22]. This link between the service offered and the audience's characteristics is emotional.

Third, it is assumed that consumption should be seen as an act of an individual who is responsible for deciding, purchasing, paying, owning and disposing even when particular services are consumed simultaneously with others. Communal Consumption in the performing arts should cast light in the absence of these kinds of studies. O'Sullivan [23] explores the experience of audience members as a consuming community and suggests that communal aspects of an experience is a relevant attribute of arts attendance, but it is complex and variable. Analyzing communal consumption is relevant because it impacts consumer loyalty [1, 24].

## Theoretical Framework Approach

The literature in the social sciences on the relevant constructs that integrate the satisfaction-loyalty models has been reviewed. We present a brief summary of various contemporary approaches to the study of the following factors: perceived quality, perceived value, satisfaction, loyalty (in its different forms), opinion leadership and opinion seeking. Next, we discuss the relationship amongst them.

### Perceived quality

Perceived quality is the consumer's judgment about a product's overall excellence or superiority that has four characteristics: perceived quality is different from actual quality; includes a higher level of abstraction rather than a specific attribute of a product; it entitles a global evaluation of an attitude; the judgment where the evaluation takes place is made within the consumer's evoked set [25]. SERVQUAL is one of the most popular scales that measure service quality by comparing

performance with expectations [26]. Using actual performance as the unique indicator has been considered more reliable. Consumer expectations are the desires and wants consumers feel a service provider should offer [26]. Expectations are constructs that serve as a framework to elaborate compensatory judgments [27]. However, the main criticism in the use of expectations is that they are highly subjective.

### **Perceived value**

In recent years, most of the marketing literature has been linked, to a certain extent, to the concept of customer value, with a clear distinction to its dual-value core aspect [25]: (1) The value that is received by the consumer and (2) what the service provider will receive in return. The concept's high level of abstraction has generated several definitions and difficulties to measure it throughout the literature and in managerial situations. In general, four main categories have given meaning to Perceived Value: (1) studies that measure it with a monetary focus in which the lower the price, the more benefit received [28]. (2) studies that relate it to an utilitarian factor and adaptability, like Economics, look for the pleasure behind the purchase but measurement of this perspective is difficult; (3) the ones that group the quality and benefits of the service with the monetary price paid, this definition is the most popular due to the easy applicability [See 29, ACSI, 30, 31]; (4) More recently, taking the last “mathematical equation” perspective, perceived value is the balance between “what I give” for “what I get” in return [25, 32, 33].

On the other side, in the ACSI model developed by Claes Fornell [31], price has been used as a more operative indicator to predict value although it has recently been expanded to other factors besides price. As an alternative to measure perceived value, Unger and Kernan [20] discuss the benefits received when a service is used as a leisure experience. This subjective perspective relates leisure to free time, hedonic, experience, recreation, and play. Unger and Kernan [20] propose six indicators that define leisure: intrinsic satisfaction, perceived freedom, involvement, arousal, mastery, and spontaneity. Leisure activities vary significantly but the literature on hedonic indicators present subtle adaptations from Unger and Kernan's original scale.

In the same way that an individual's budget restricts his decision processes, Time restrictions also moderates the perceived value [25]. Finally, Holbrook and Corfman [34] also explain that perceived value is situational and is determined by the framework where the evaluation takes place before, during or after consumption.

### **Customer satisfaction**

One of the most important concepts in marketing literature is the customer satisfaction construct. Customer satisfaction is a judgment of a pleasurable level of consumption-related fulfillment with respect to any aspect of a service experience [19]. It is a relatively temporary post purchase state that reflects how the product or service has fulfilled its purpose. Marketing literature offers two different conceptualizations of satisfaction: (1) Satisfaction seen as a transaction-specific concept, associated with individual level behavioral research for specific purchase occasions [35]. (2) Satisfaction seen as an aggregate measure based on past purchases, consumption experiences or prior information [30, 36]. This second perspective is useful to measure satisfaction at the firm level. According to traditional theory, providing satisfaction is an important source of sustainable competitive advantage since it reduces price-sensitivity, and facilitates the process of retaining existing customers [37].

Several studies have described the consequences of satisfaction: increases in customer lifetime value, reduced costs of future transactions, lower costs of attracting new customers, word of mouth and reduced price elasticities [38]; customer complaint reduction and loyalty increase [39, 40]; repurchase intentions and lower elasticities of retention and satisfaction [41, 42].

## Multicollinearity Effect

According to Garbarino [6], global evaluations such as cumulative satisfaction, perceived quality and value show a strong correlation between each other; in other words, a “halo effect” [43] or “multicollinearity effect” [44], which is the empirical inseparability of the sum of the global evaluations that form the model. This effect is the result of a cognitive and a mental process that synthesize the information from “inferences built from other inferences” or “ideas from other ideas” [45].

## Customer Loyalty

A large selection of studies have investigated and tested hypotheses that include the loyalty concept by differentiating attitudinal and behavioral loyalty [46-49]. Customer loyalty is the “willingness of someone -a customer, an employee, a friend- to make an investment or personal sacrifice in order to strengthen a relationship” [50]. **Attitudinal loyalty** has been measured by two constructs: commitment and word-of-mouth. **Behavioral loyalty** consists of two indicators: nonswitching behavior and purchase repetition. Commitment is an attitudinal type of loyalty and it is defined as the individual’s intention to remain in the relationship and to make the effort to remain in it [51]. Similarly, Garbarino and Johnson [6] define it as the enduring wish to maintain a relationship when there is something of value in that relationship. Word-of-mouth is the action of referencing a product or brand by passing information about its performance. This attitudinal form of loyalty considered by some academics the truest form of loyalty since the individual does not only provide information but also he puts his reputation at risk [50]. Due to the obvious use of the last two behavioral indicators (repetition and non-switching behavior) to measure profitability, it is redundant to give further theoretical evidence of their link with the company’s growth.

## Opinion Leadership and Opinion Seeking Tendencies

Little academic research has been done to describe the opinion leadership and opinion seeking tendencies as a trigger of behavioral or attitudinal consumption consequences.

Also known as “market mavens” [52], opinion leaders are individuals with the knowledge and the expertise to influence the attitudes and actions of others [53, 54]. Previous studies have noted that this tendency cannot be generalized to all purchasing environments and to all situations of the person’s life. In contrast, opinion leadership varies by product type [55, 56], and by product category [57].

Several academic studies have described opinion leader’s characteristics. Two areas of study describe these typologies: psychological aspects define an opinion leader as vain, self-centered, self-confident, social, individualistic, and with the self-perception that they are unique [58, 59]; behavioral variables describe an opinion leader as heavy users of a particular product, suggesting that frequency of purchase is linked to the tendency to be an opinion leader [54, 60]. Especially interesting is the settings in which those studies take place, innovation, self-expression related products like fashion or technology fulfill psychological needs and this, in turn, increases opinion leadership. It is assumed that in the art and leisure context, opinion leaders want to achieve these personal needs.

Opinion seeking, in comparison to the psychological factors found for Opinion leadership, has a negative relationship with the need for uniqueness and it is associated positively with people that pay attention to social comparisons [58]. Opinion seeking’s main components are: seeking information or opinions, product (service or area of interest) evaluation is the main goal, interpersonal sources are consulted to achieve objectives. Additionally, innovation and opinion seeking have an asymmetric relationship [61, 62].

## **Relationship among Quality – Satisfaction - Loyalty, Previous Models.**

Satisfaction as predictor of future intentions groups the basic models that have guided the consumer behavior theories [37, 63, 64]. Transactional or relational models generate effective results on future intentions when satisfaction, quality and perceived value serve as mediators.

The consumer behavior literature has suggested various models that predict profitability through future intentions and attitudinal constructs. The basic criteria used for these models combine perceptual constructs such as perceived quality, value and satisfaction with the mediation of behavioral tendencies such as opinion seeking and opinion leadership. All with an impact to different types of loyalty [65, 66]. Empirical evidence suggests a high correlation between perceived quality and satisfaction [67], and their impact with loyalty [27].

From a general viewpoint, models that predict loyalty are formed by two types of measurement: Observable metrics are those that take place with behavioral aspects during purchase or consumption of a product or service; Non-observable are those that include perception, attitudes and future intentions. Behavioral variables lead to strategic decisions about attracting, retaining and obtaining customer value throughout the time (Customer Lifetime Value).

Gupta and Zeithaml [68] propose a simplified structure of four major constructs to explain the link between: (1) marketing activities offered, (2) consumer's mental creation, (3) activities done with the information obtained and (4) the link between actions with the firm's profitability. Several links are obtained from combining the previous factors.

Similarly, Johnson and Gustafsson [9] suggest a similar representation to Gupta and Zeithaml's using four elements: internal quality, perceived quality and consumer's satisfaction, loyalty and retention, and profitability. In this case, the loyalty and retention area examine future intentions related to repetition and retention. However, some other studies have divided the perceptual level in perceived quality, satisfaction and behavioral intentions [69]. Additionally, Storbacka, Strandvik, and Grönroos [70] assess the impact of attitudinal variables on behavioral outcome in an extended form by incorporating competitive environment elements such as switching costs, strength of the relationship, interpersonal factors like word-of-mouth and perceived alternatives. Inclusion of these variables complement and gives relevance to mediators such as opinion leadership and opinion seeking behavior that may have a significant role in a particular purchasing context such as the arts.

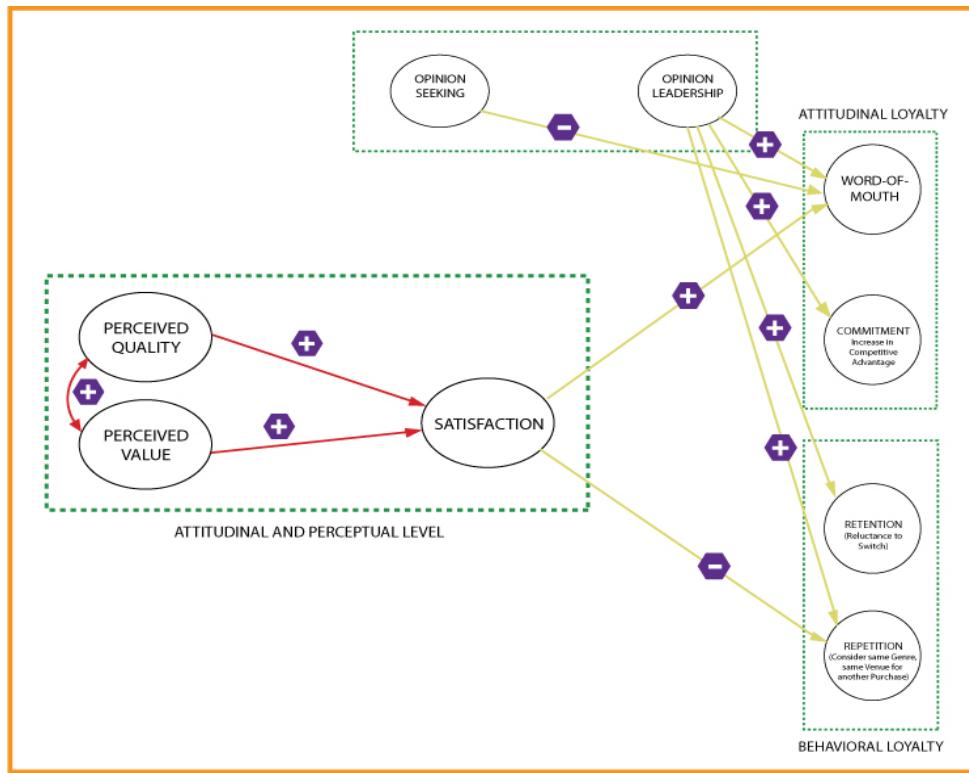
As it has been mentioned, in the case of a leisure experience, communal consumption takes place and decision process lies in the opinion of reference groups, these constructs have a stronger influence on loyalty than the impact of satisfaction on loyalty itself. Based on a study conducted in a music related environment, opinion leadership was positively associated with behavioral loyalty, opinion leaders are frequent buyers of music products and same category products and they are highly aware of new releases [71]. Similarly, for high involvement products, or products that fulfill self-expression and leisure needs, opinion leadership impacts enduring involvement, commitment and status consumption (products that confer social status) [72]. We believe that opinion leaders with an arts experience are committed individuals who refer a show or movie and attend the same arts venue frequently.

As of opinion seeking behavior, Shoham and Ruvio's study [57] provide evidence in the computer and software market about the negative association between computer store visits, readership, involvement and opinion seeking behavior. The exact negative correlation was assessed by previous marketing academic research. We infer that an individual's opinion seeking tendency is not related to any type of loyalty.

To sum up and establish a visual approach to the studies mentioned before, we suggest the inclusion of behavioral tendencies (opinion leadership and opinion seeking) to explain the relationship between cognitive and affective evaluations on the types of loyalty found in the literature. A first moment would test the impact between perceived quality, and perceived value on satisfaction, a second moment would examine the positive link between satisfaction with attitudinal

and behavioral loyalty and a third would describe the mediation between opinion leadership and opinion seeking with loyalty (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Visual representation of Consumer Behavior Constructs



Source: Personal compilation based on previous research

## Conclusions

This study aimed to call for up-to-date literature on the conceptualization and the existing interrelation among the constructs presented here. Based on this, attitudinal constructs like perceived quality, value and satisfaction are useful predictors of attitudinal and behavioral loyalty. Loyalty is an ambiguous construct that has been operationalized in various ways. We have reviewed and defined four main constructs that measure the most relevant aspects of loyalty: attitudinal constructs like commitment and word of mouth communication, and behavioral constructs like repetition (frequency of purchase) and non-switching behavior (retention). Behavioral loyalty has usually been preferred for the quick and immediate generation of revenues. However, attitudinal loyalty has positive social implications that allow arts and entertainment organizations reach their goals and make their artistic work available to a wider range of publics. Having a more diverse set of outcomes, we theoretically describe the different impact between satisfaction and each one of the four types of loyalty.

On the other hand, we found the insufficiency of studies that incorporate behaviors like opinion seeking and opinion leadership as possible mediators in the satisfaction-loyalty relationship. Some empirical evidence obtained from different business contexts mention that involvement, repetition of use, social status or self-expression variables play a key role in the individual's likelihood to seek or/and give his opinion.

The framework presented here could be used to contrast the relationships with a cross sectional study, using a more tailored scale. This framework challenges researchers and poses several questions to test empirically: Does a firm's overall evaluations of the service present high multicollinearity levels? Is a firm's satisfaction level positively associated with all types of loyalty?

What is the effect of satisfaction on Attitudinal Loyalty in comparison to Behavioral Loyalty when the consumer is evaluating a leisure experience? Do Opinion leadership and Opinion seeking behavior have an asymmetric relationship? Do they have a positive relationship with loyalty?

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