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Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/jretconser

Do the warning notices decrease or increase opportunistic behavior in cinemas?

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 18 April 2016

Received in revised form

4 June 2016

Accepted 30 June 2016

Keywords:

Consumer ethical beliefs

Emotional experience

Tainted-fruit effect

Opportunistic behavior

Cinema servicescapes

Warning notices

ABSTRACT

Drawing on the theory of reasoned action, emotional experiences, and the effect of warning notices on moviegoers, an integrated model is proposed. Three hundred and forty-five respondents were recruited and randomly assigned one of three scenario descriptions. After reading the scenario descriptions, the levels of respondent opportunistic behavior and emotional experience were measured by questionnaire. The findings indicate that when consumers have a relatively high level of ethical belief, they tend to favor a cinema's policy and exhibit few opportunistic behaviors. Moreover, as the level customer ethical belief increases, their emotional experience decreases. This effect of warning notices supports the tainted fruit theory. The research conclusions serve as references for cinema owners in operating their business and for the related institutions in implementing appropriate policies.

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1. Introduction

Going to the movies is an experience that involves consumer subjective feeling. The advent of the experience economy has prompted consumers to regard experience as an economic product. Businesses tend to use services as a means of performance and products as tools to provide entertaining experiences for consumers. In addition to film content, high-quality cinema facilities and staff service are necessary to support such experiences (Pine and Gilmore, 1999). However, experience activities are evaluated according to the subjective perceptions of consumers. Apart from the core product (i.e., the film content), factors such as cinema rules, environment cleanness, surround sound system, scent, temperature, staff service quality, can influence consumer experience in going to the movies (Lovell, 1983).

Although rules forbidding outside foods from being taken into cinemas is common in U.S.-style cinemas, Taiwanese culture and consumer habits in moviegoing differ substantially from those of consumers in the United States. Numerous Taiwanese consumers asserted that rules forbidding outside food run counter to the principle of reciprocity; therefore, bans on outside food in cinemas was abolished in Taiwan. On February 8, 2010, Taiwan's Consumer Protection Committee (GIO) proclaimed that cinemas may not use

a standard contract that forbids outside food from being brought into cinemas. The proclamation specifies the following:

The cinema industry cannot set announcements or labels, or verbally inform consumers not to carry food with them into the cinema. However, cinema operators can declare or set a label at a conspicuous site of the cinema to inform consumers that they are not allowed to carry food with a spicy or strong smell, hot soups (drinks), or foods that make noise while being eaten into the cinema (GIO, 2010).

After the regulations banning outside foods from cinemas were relaxed, some cinemas listed the names or categories of forbidden outside foods on notices. The matter of whether consumers insist on carrying such foods into cinemas is an ethical concern. Therefore, the theory of reasoned action from Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) was adopted in this study.

Rules concerning outside foods differ among cinemas; when consumers purchase outside food to enjoy during the film, these foods are often confiscated by cinema staff upon entry into the cinema. Consequently, in such cases, consumers experience negative emotions even before the film begins. Such an experience is detrimental to the quality of the moviegoing experience and also disturbs other consumers' emotional experiences. Cinema operators forbid consumers from bringing outside food into the cinema to maintain the quality of the moviegoing experience; certain foods have a strong smell and generate noise when eaten, and this may negatively affect the quality of the filmgoing experience for other consumers and pollute the cinema environment. Therefore,

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consumer emotional experience is included in the research model described herein.

The forbidden fruit and tainted fruit theories (Bushman, 1998) were previously adopted to explain warning label effects on consumer perceptions of food, cigarettes, and alcoholic beverages (MacKinnon et al., 2001); however, these theories have seldom been applied to ethical concerns. Because of the high number of cinemas stipulating various rules that give the appearance of legal regulations, consumers have become confused, with some opportunistic consumers exploiting the unspecified sections of the regulations. In the current study, the forbidden fruit and tainted fruit theories were adopted to discuss how consumers are affected by different levels of warnings on notices forbidding outside food at the entrance of a cinema.

The effects of warning notices determine the quality of viewing experiences on the basis of consumer ethical beliefs and judgment; furthermore, these effects influence consumer opportunistic behaviors. Therefore, drawing on the theory of reasoned action, the warning notice effect, and consumer emotional experiences, and an integrated model is proposed. By answering the research questions, we hope to provide a service design principle for service providers in cinema servicescapes. The research questions are proposed as follows:

- (1) How are the relationships among consumer ethical beliefs, ethical judgment, and opportunistic consumer behavior affected according to the theory of reasoned action?
- (2) Regarding the emotional experience perspective, how do the determinates—consumer ethical beliefs and ethical judgment—affect consumer emotional experiences?
- (3) Regarding the tainted-fruit and forbidden fruit effects, do different levels of information shown on warning notices affect consumer opportunistic behaviors?

2. Conceptual framework and hypothesis development

2.1. Application of ethical decision-making model in marketing

Rest (1986) proposed a four-stage model to describe the four psychological processes people undergo when adopting ethical behaviors: recognizing moral issues, making moral judgments, establishing moral intent, and adopting ethical behaviors. Dubinsky and Loken (1989) developed an ethical decision-making model based on the theory of reasoned action (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975); the model describes the relationship among behavioral beliefs, attitudes, subjective norms, intentions, and behaviors.

Dubinsky and Loken (1989) stated that Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) theory of reasoned action is more appropriate than is the four-stage model from Rest (1986) in discussing the conditions in marketing ethics for four specific reasons. First, the theory of reasoned action not only includes four variables from Rest's model, but also incorporates motivation to comply and perceived consequences, and is therefore more comprehensive than is Rest's (1986) model. Second, the variables are broadly defined in Rest's model; therefore, it is difficult to operationalize. Third, the theory of reasoned action has been successfully applied to numerous disciplines; therefore, the model may be more suitable for discussing ethical issues in marketing. Fourth, relative to other ethical models, the theory of reasoned action is parsimonious (Dubinsky and Loken, 1989). According to these reasons, the current study adopted the theory of reasoned action (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975) to explore consumer behaviors in bringing outside food into cinemas.

According to the theory of reasoned action (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975), beliefs affect attitude (i.e., judgment). Subsequently,

judgment affects intention and behavior. **Consumer ethical beliefs** refer to the ethical principles and standards that guide consumer behavior when they obtain, use, and discard products or services (Muncy and Vitell, 1992). **Ethical judgment** refers to the extent to which a decision maker acknowledges a certain behavior or event as being ethical. The decision maker's evaluations of perceived ethicalness versus unethicalness, right versus wrong, and good versus evil also affect their ethical judgment (Schwepker and Good, 1999). **Opportunistic behavior** refers to situations in which consumers pursue their self-interests (Berry and Seiders, 2008). Singley and Williams (1995) contended that opportunistic behaviors range widely from severe or blatantly illegal behavior (e.g., theft, intellectual property theft, and insurance fraud) to common negative behavior (e.g., abusing discount coupons and free-rider behavior). After the regulations banning outside foods from cinemas were relaxed, some cinemas listed the names or categories of forbidden outside foods on notices. If consumers insist on carrying such foods into the cinema, then their behavior is considered opportunistic.

The consumer behavior of carrying outside food into cinemas is affected by consumer judgment of the topic, which is based on the personal beliefs of individual consumers. Therefore, opportunistic behavior is affected by the personal ethical beliefs and ethical judgments of consumers. Accordingly, the following hypotheses were proposed:

Hypothesis 1. (H1). When consumers have strong ethical beliefs, their judgment regarding whether they can bring outside food into a cinema favors the position of the cinema operators.

Hypothesis 2. (H2). When consumers have strong ethical beliefs, they are unlikely to bring forbidden outside food into a cinema.

Hypothesis 3. (H3). As a consumer's ethical judgment increasingly favors the position of cinema operators, the likeliness that the consumer will engage in opportunistic behaviors decreases.

2.2. Ethical decision-making model and emotional experiences

In the context of cinemas, the attributes of experience are perceived at a higher level than are those of other service sectors. Thus, individual subjective experience is crucial in moviegoing. Pine and Gilmore (1999) considered consumer experience as an economic product, in which businesses provide services as a performance stage and products as performance tools used to orchestrate memorable events for consumers. Schmitt (1999) asserted that experience refers to creating various types of memorable events for consumers. The ultimate goal is to create a holistic experience that connects the senses, emotions, cognition, action, and association. Emotional experiences form emotional bonds between consumers and brands, products, and services. Most emotions are experienced during consumption (Schmitt, 1999), especially in service encounters (Huang and Chen, 2014). The emotions of cinema patrons are affected by the film content, cinema environment, and outside food policies. We defined the emotional experience of cinema patrons as being affected by outside food policies.

The ethical beliefs and judgments of individual consumers regarding the rules forbidding outside food affect their filmgoing experience. Some studies have evidenced that emotion plays a crucial role in ethical decision-making processes (Guzak, 2015; Kaplan and Tivnan, 2014) and is a driver of behavior (Bilgihan et al., 2016). When consumers have strong ethical beliefs and their ethical judgment favors the outside food policy of the cinema, the consumers tend to be concerned about opportunistic behavior, affecting their filmgoing experience. Some outside foods may have a strong smell that spreads throughout the theater, and

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