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## The effects on service value and customer retention by integrating after sale service into the traditional marketing mix model of clothing store brands in China

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### ABSTRACT

The literature on clothing store brands showed the inadequacy of the conventional marketing mix strategy. Because of this scarcity, recent scholars have suggested evaluating the service marketing mix (SMM) for “clothing store brands” by adding an additional important element, namely after-sales service. This research therefore investigated and incorporated the one new dimension of the service marketing mix instead of following the conventional 7 P's of SMM. This study also investigated the impact of SMM store brands (promotion, place, people, product, price, process, physical evidence and after sale service) on service value and customer retention to clothing store brands in China. Since there are so many new entrants selling and providing similar goods and services, clothing store brands suppliers from “China” compete with each other in a competitive market. As a consequence, retention becomes a concern. Convenience sampling technique data were collected from surveys conducted with different people in different positions. In “China” the sampling technique data were used to obtain data from store brands where customers have ever bought clothing store brands in China. This study gathered a total of 385 usable questionnaires and analyzed the data using the Partial Least Square Method. The result showed that the service marketing mix has a significant positive impact both directly and indirectly on customer retention through Service Value (SV). This study will be of interest to the clothing store brands industry to understand how marketing mix approaches are important for sustaining a long-term customer relationship. This study indicates a selectivity of right marketing activities to suit the particular business at a particular time and then to use it in particular situations.

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## 1. Introduction

Many people from around the world buy store brand-name clothes from China. China is a popular Country (one of the most visited options) and the Chinese clothing development market could encourage the growth of the clothing industry, the so-called “clothing store brands”. This refers to affordable price, plain, small-scale clothing; facilities are relatively simple but decorated elegantly, paying attention to detailed features and striving to achieve consistency in the clothes

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core services. Clothing store brands from all over the world with wide prospects for development, especially business people, ordinary wage earners, at their own expense, preferred by tourists and students (Othman et al., 2020).

In recent years, the demand of clothing store brands in China has increased from simplification to diversification and multi-level growth. The China clothing industry is also a diversified, multi-faceted type, providing different types of reception services and facilities preferred by a vast number of consumers. Appropriate location, cost-effective price, excellent service, affordable and comfortable, a safe and convenient clothing industry has emerged and a leap forward in growth has been accomplished in just a few years (Khatab et al., 2019).

China's level of consumption is relatively low, allowing many tourists from around the world to apply for a tourist visa. This has a net effect of drawing more and more visitors from around the world. Economic clothing, contrasting the basic programs and services, has its significant position in the tourist market. Although clothing store brands and high-grade clothes rates are similar, the price of the clothing store brands is accessible, cost-effective, chosen first by many visitors (such as business travelers and travel guests). Therefore, in the middle market, between the high-end and low-end market, clothing store brands compared to the international standard, despite having some problems, the Economic Clothing has its advantages (Yan, 2015).

Service Marketing Mix (SMM) components can be command methods and can provide the organizational margins that to lead in the service value (SV) (Octavia, 2017). A lively indulgence of SMM elements by such service providers will have an effect on future and existing customers, transforming them into customer retention (CR) and helping them remain loyal for a longer period of time, and providing a more competitive position in their business life (Wahab et al., 2016). Accepting the lack of explorations and research conducted in this clothing store brands area as described by Khatab et al. (2019), this investigation seeks to answer the question of whether there is a significant link between SMM and SV clothing services and clothing store brands retention in "China"

Clothing store brands literature disclosed that the strategy of the standard marketing mix is not enough. This preliminary information revealed that as suggested by Egonsson et al. (2013), Issac et al. (2013), Maghsoudlou et al. (2014), SMM for clothing store brands must include one additional dimension, namely after-sales operation. Expanding the conventional SMM to include the one new dimension, namely after-sale service, is therefore essential. This research effort is therefore aimed at examining the eight dimensions of SMM and recognizing their effect on SV and retention among clothes consumers.

SMM has various evolution stages, for example, from 4P's to 7P's and this process is still on going. In various types of industries, people alter this mix to get the maximum benefit. M. (2002) had explored that 8P's of the marketing mix are required for travel and tour services. Haq and Farooq (2014) also suggested additional 2P's for clothing services. Some other studies also suggested that these 8P's are not enough for such types of services (Haq and Farooq, 2014), and there is still a requirement to augment the SMM for clothing services (Haq and Farooq, 2014), especially in clothing store brands. Keeping in view the gap in the literature in service marketing mix, this study explored one additional dimension (not P's): after sale service (Ladokun et al., 2013; Nwachukwu, 2018).

This study explored and integrated one new dimension (not P's) for service marketing mix, rather than traditional SMM of 7P's. The study's research framework was supported by the Stimulus-Organism-Response theory. Two of the three main constructs, namely, SMM and SV were conceptualized as second-order constructs and assessed via the reflective-formative approach.

The perspective of the Chinese clothing industry whereby there is lack of literature discussing the research topic, and also it was noted that are so many new participants selling and offering similar products and services. Therefore, it is important for this industry to focus on customers' special needs and preferences to maintain and retain the long-term relationship. Thus, again the main contribution that leads to novelty of this paper is about examining the SMM of the industry to get the clear picture of how the industry had performed and how well they serve the current clothing customer.

The result indicated the SMM has a significant positive effect on CR through SV both directly and indirectly. This study will be of interest to the clothing industry, both in China and worldwide, in understanding how marketing mix strategies are essential in maintaining a long-term relationship with customers.

The main objective of this study is to investigate the influence of SMM on SV and CR towards clothing store brands in China. The result indicated the SMM has a significant positive effect on CR through SV both directly and indirectly. Section 2 presents literature review and hypotheses development; Section 3 presents the applied methodology; Section 4 presents the main results, discussion and interpretation of main results. Section 5 presented the main concluding remarks achieved in this study; Section 6 presented theoretical and managerial implications; finally, presented Limitations in this study are presented in Section 7.

## 2. Literature review and hypotheses development

### 2.1. Clothing store brands

Local brands in China have significant competition, the international giants. These are well-known brands, which are part of the category known as fast fashion. We find Zara, H & M, Uniqlo, Gap, C&A. Chinese brands are developing strategies to compete with these international brands that are already well established in China. Interestingly more

and more Chinese brands have managed to open shops in the 2nd and 3rd tier cities. By moving to these new cities, brands have the opportunity to grow and have a larger customer base. Although there has been a rapid growth in international e-commerce, Chinese consumers still visit stores and Chinese brands are competing with their international rivals.

## 2.2. Customer retention

Customer retention requires a sales organization's attention to details in order to reduce consumer complaints. Good customer retention begins with the first interaction a customer has with a company and continues for the entire lifespan of a partnership. Customer retention is important for most companies, as the cost of attracting a new customer is much higher than the cost of maintaining a partnership with a current customer (Pansari and Kumar, 2017). Several studies have stressed the importance of customer retention in the banking industry (Anaweera and Prabhu, 2003).

Relatively straightforward is the case for customer retention. Maintaining clients is more profitable than picking up new ones. The costs of having consumers to "replace" those missing are high. This is because the importance of consumer interest is born only in the early stages of the business partnership (Ahmad and Buttle, 2002). In addition, longer-term consumers buy more, and if they are pleased and satisfied they will create successful word-of-mouth marketing for the brand. Long-term buyers are therefore less time-consuming and less prone to price fluctuations (Kahrig, 2005). These findings represent the potential for management to acquire referral firms, as the acquisition is often of superior quality and cheap. Therefore, reducing product failures by as little as five percent is claimed to have double the income (Kahrig, 2005).

## 2.3. Service value

Past literature suggests that several issues surrounding the fundamental problem in the construction of service quality remained unresolved, including lack of consensus and ambiguity in describing service value (Eid and El-Gohary, 2015; Wu and Li, 2017). It makes identifying service value a challenge because of the ambiguity of value definitions and should not necessarily be used in any research study to prevent some misused or overused definition of service value (Bruhn and Georgi, 2006).

Researchers used various terms to describe the construct of service value, although most of the terms are related to the same definition (Lovelock and Wirtz, 2011a,b). According to Woodall (2003), eighteen different names have been identified for the market benefit arising from purchasing and using the brand contact. However, Woodall noted that "customer interest" (Dodds, 1999; Anderson and Narus, 1998), "perceived value" (Patterson and Spreng, 1997; Liljander and Strandvik, 1997) and "value" (de Ruyter et al., 1997; Berry and Yadav, 1996) are the most widely used words in advertising literature.

The "consumption quality" (Sheth et al., 1991), "customer value" (Reichheld, 1996), "customer value" (Treacy and Wiersema, 1993), "customer perceived value" (Grönroos, 1997), "product value" (Holbrook, 1999), "customer perceived value" (Lai, 1995), were the most commonly used words. "Service value" (Bolton and Drew, 1991), "subjective expected value" (Bolton, 1998), "perceived value for money" (Sweeney et al., 1999), "net customer value" (Butz and L.D., 1996), "perceived value for service" (LeBlanc and Nguyen, 1999), "consumer surplus" (Anderson, 1995) and "expected value" (Huber et al., 1997).

## 2.4. Service marketing mix

SMM's leading role in managing advertising challenges, which the consumer deliberates, has been regarded as critical. The adapted SMM (Othman et al., 2020) model known as 7P's has seven MM elements including "service/product, cost, promotion, place, people, process and physical evidence" in an extension to the 4P's. To achieve and retain competitive advantages, it can be reported that each organization needs to implement successful MM strategy. There are two interrelated viewpoints in the advertising strategy: target audience and marketing mix. According to Kiran and Diljit (2016) target market identifies the profile of distinct groups of consumers who vary in their wants, desires, expectations and establishes an integrated marketing communications strategy to show and deliver the advantages of organizational products or services. Based on this statement, this analysis tends to add one more aspect to the MM of the 7P's namely: the study is perceived as an after sale service (Haq et al., 2009). Next, subsections provide a brief explanation of the nine dimensions of SMM: at that time, another concept proposed by Boom and Bitner's was relevant in the manufacturing sector, applying to services such as "after sales service" in the airline, travel and banking sectors.

Many other authors used the 7P's model to discover their implementation by publication in the SMM field (Othman et al., 2019), efficiency and performance (Lovelock and Wirtz, 2011a,b) personalization (Goldsmith, 1999), and some used people instead of participation. Afridi (2009), Haq et al. (2009) have suggested an additional 8th "P" for clothing expansion of marketing mix. This shows the SMM's 7P's to be used as a basic method for businesses to frame strategies, policies, operation and strategic dimensions of customer-related outcomes, and market results in the contemporary business environment.

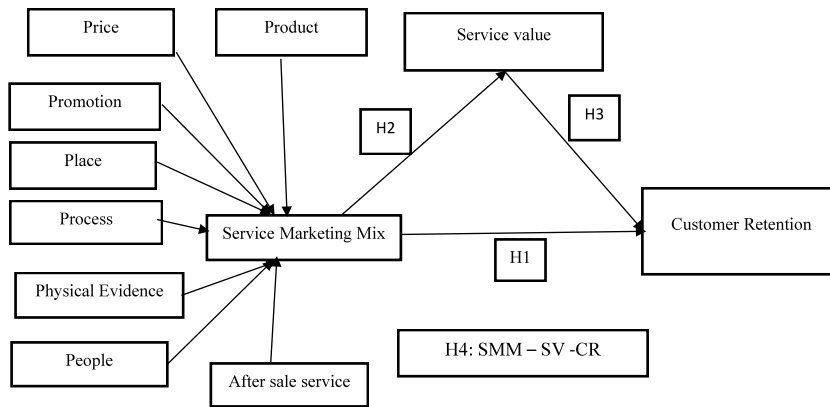


Fig. 1. Research Framework.

The Service Marketing Mix (SMM) has different stages of development from 4P's to 7P's and this process is still in progress. People change this mix in various kinds of industries to achieve maximum benefits. M. (2002) explored that travel and tour services require 8P's of the SMM. Haq and Farooq (2014) also suggested additional 2P's for clothing brands. Some other studies have indicated that these 8P's are not even adequate for such types of services (Haq et al., 2009) and there is still a need to increase the SMM for clothing brands (Haq et al., 2009), especially in clothing store brands. Keeping in view of the gap in service marketing mix literature, this study will explore an additional dimension (not P's) named after sales service (Senguo et al., 2017).

## 2.5. Hypotheses development

The present study hypotheses have been developed on the basis of the analysis context as shown in Fig. 1. Hypothesis formulation was supposed to be accurate and responded to the stated study goals. All hypotheses are balanced by the items included in the questionnaires of this report. The present study postulates that the customer loyalty dependent factor is affected by the combination of product advertising and consumer quality. Such two independent variables are significant predictors of customer retention in clothing store brands due to the fact that clothing customer experience concerns are always surrounded by these variables. This research also hypothesized the indirect relationship as a mediating factor by product quality. Therefore, the present study had proposed four hypotheses to be tested and hypothesis creation was addressed in the subheading below.

### 2.5.1. The relationship between service marketing mix and customer retention

Corroboratively, Goi (2009) recognizes that marketing mix was an important principle for simplifying the management of marketing activities and allowing marketing efforts to be separated in order to meet customer needs and retention. This argument was confirmed by Sarker et al. (2012)'s study findings in the tourism context in which six elements of the service marketing mix were found to be important for customer retention excluding service cost. Similarly, Thalib (2015) research in tourism also found that there was a significant relationship between five elements of the service marketing mix, namely service item, service cost, service location, service people and service physical evidence as well as customer retention. In other words, service marketing mix implementation would have an effect on customer retention.

However, in past studies such as Loo and Leung (2018) and Jobhaarbima (2017), the position of service marketing mix as one construct is still ambiguous and not clearly explained. This is a hole in the present study which needs to be investigated. The first hypothesis for this analysis is therefore proposed below:

**H1: There is an important relationship between service marketing mix and customer retention.**

### 2.5.2. The relationship between service marketing mix and service value

Through the theoretical perspective of the stimulus-organism-response model, external stimulus variable contributes to thinking and analyzing internal individual states (Chang et al., 2011). Goi et al. (2014) study conquered the environmental influences that had significantly influenced the organism. It means motivational factors such as service marketing mix, can influence the minds of people in order to make a judgment on the service value.

Past studies have been piece meal on this relationship. Service price and service position were found to be important to service value in the Cengiz and Yayla (2007) study results. In another study, results from Ye et al. (2014) suggest venue, cleanliness as part of physical evidence, and service to the service value of the employee was significant. While Ryu et al. (2012) found that the quality of food representing the consumer item in Chinese restaurants in the United States had a significant relationship to the importance of customer service. Due to the lack of coverage in past literature, the

relationship between service marketing mix and service value is still not well known or fully understood. Further analysis into this relationship provides a valuable finding for meeting the study gap found. In contrast, applying the formative approach to the service marketing and service value increased the value of the output of the report. The present study suggests the following hypothesis based on an interesting theoretical idea and several previous studies:

**H2: There is an important relationship between service marketing mix and service value**

#### 2.5.3. *The relationship between service value and customer retention*

In the literature of marketing services, the relationship between service value and customer retention has been strongly deliberated. Several studies of this relationship suggest that the service value precedes customer retention and has been shown to have a significant influence on customer retention (Eid and El-Gohary, 2015; Edward and Sahadev, 2011; Nazeer et al., 2018; Walsh et al., 2013). Recognized on previous findings regarding significant relationships for these two concepts, the present study is not limited to continuing work in this relationship. The findings of this study in the context of clothing store brands services contribute to the existing knowledge of this relationship. The seventh hypothesis was suggested as follows on the basis of the above discussion:

**H3: There is an important relationship between service value and customer retention.**

#### 2.5.4. *Service value as a mediator between after-sale service and customer retention*

After sale services are referred as the contact to the customers after they bought clothing. Contacting their customers after the sale can help them in building an ongoing relationship with customers, and also encouraging customers to talk about their business in a positive way (Taha et al., 2020). After sale services are excellent opportunities in obtaining customer retention and proving that customers are their main priority.

During the purchasing of clothing, the after-sale service needs to be explored in terms of its benefit by using customer feedback mechanisms in order to improve the quality of services. Also empirical evidence on this relationship is not available. Therefore, we can assume the following hypothesis:

**H4 Service value mediator has a significant positive relationship between after-sale service and customer retention**

#### 2.5.5. *The mediating role of service value between service marketing mix and customer retention*

As a motivational factor for service value and customer retention, the right combination of service marketing mix produces active organizational elements of mix. Service value incorporation in the relationship between service marketing mix and customer retention can lead to a greater variability in building and promoting customer satisfaction. Past studies have shown that service value is a basis for the retention of customers (Sadq et al., 2019; Prebensen et al., 2013; Ghalandari, 2013; Gallarza et al., 2013).

As noted in the previous paragraph, past studies have separately studied the service marketing mix elements in which this review argues that testing the service marketing mix elements individually for the dependent variable is not compatible with marketing mix theories (Jacoby, 2002; Kellerman et al., 1995). The findings on service marketing mix's role in service value and customer retention were fragmented. A few studies, however, found a mediating role of service value between service marketing mix elements and customer retention. For example, the study by Kwun (2011) found that food quality and menu variety are partly mediated by service value for retention of female consumers. Whereas, the service quality items in Kwun's study containing the service people aspect found customer retention to be fully mediated by service value.

The "correlation between service marketing mix, service value as a mediating factor and consumer retention is worth investigating as the relationship is still lacking in current empirical explanations". The present study therefore postulates the fourth hypothesis as follows:

**H5 Service value mediates the relationship between service marketing mix and customer retention**

### 2.6. *Conceptual framework*

Based on the literature review, the following model is chosen as the conceptual model of this study: the SMM includes seven essential elements called P's such as "price, product, place, process, promotion, physical evidence and people" and adds one more dimension to the 7P's MM namely "after sale service", all of which are independent variables and customer retention is the dependent variable. Additionally, service value is mediator as shown in Fig. 1. The aim of elements is to evaluate the connections among SMM with SV and CR.

## 3. Methodology

This study's population is composed of customers who purchased clothing brands in China is based on the nonprobability sampling design, more specifically; convenient sampling technique was used to select respondents were obtained from surveys conducted in different positions with different people, such as the professor, Ph.D. students, MSc students and BSc students of different nationalities in China. The survey included a total of 385 volunteer respondents, and data were

**Table 1**  
Demographic characteristics of respondents.

Demographic	Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	149	38.7
	Female	236	61.3
Age	Below 18 years old	25	6.5
	19–25	92	23.9
	26–35	96	24.9
	36–45	118	30.6
	Above 45 years old	54	14.0
Qualification	Higher school	39	10.1
	Degree	90	23.4
	Master	212	55.1
	Doctoral and above	44	11.4
Occupation	Student	151	39.2
	Professionals	65	16.9
	Service personnel	58	15.1
	Freelancer	23	6.0
	Government	14	3.6
Marital Status	Others	74	19.2
	Single	197	43.8
	Married	169	51.2
	Other	19	0.05
Monthly Salary (RMB)	Below 3000	59	15.3
	3001 to 5000	89	23.1
	5001 to 7000	95	24.7
	7001 to 9000	64	16.6
	Above 9000	78	20.3
How many times you buy clothing brands per month	1 time	45	11.7
	2 times	68	17.6
	3 times	109	28.3
	4 times	103	26.8
	More than 4 times	60	15.6
Source of Information about clothing store brands	Online	272	70.6
	Friend	42	10.9
	Relative	14	3.6
	Advertisement	24	6.2
	Others	33	8.6

analyzed using the Partial Least Square process. The present research selects a reflective-formative modeling method that is suitable to the constructs being evaluated. At a higher order construct level, one construct, namely service marketing mix, were measured through formative modeling where eight variables coded as, physical evidence product, place, price, people, promotion, process and after sale service were conceptualized to form the SMM construct. The validity of the questionnaire was tested using smart PLS software, using confirmatory factor analysis. The questionnaire's reliability has also been tested by composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha, and the findings are higher than 70%, suggesting the questionnaire's high reliability (Sarstedt et al., 2017). The questionnaire was comprised of four sections. The first section is the demographic information of the respondents. The second section contains questions linked with dimensions of the service marketing mix: promotion (Al-Debi and Al-waely, 2015), price (Al-Dmour et al., 2013), product (Al-Dmour et al., 2013), place (Helm and Gritsch, 2014), physical evidence (Khorsheed et al., 2020), people (Lee et al., 2014), process (Sreenivas et al., 2013) and after sale service (Coviello and Yli-Renko, 2016). The third part was about items of service value (Huang et al., 2019). The final part was about questions concerning customer retention (Han and Sean, 2015). Sample size has been selected on the basis of Krejcie and Morgan (1970). According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970) for this study purpose, we were collect data from 385 clothing store brands from China.

## 4. Findings and discussion

### 4.1. Profile of respondents

The aim of the profile of respondents is the examination of the characteristics of the respondents according to the study samples that were established. Table 1 shows the percentage and frequency defining the sample on the basis of gender, age, occupation, qualification, marital status, monthly salary and how many times you buy clothing brands per month, and Source of Information about the type of clothing store brands the respondents stayed in every month. The details of all have been shown following:

By gender, the clothing store consumers that were male totaled 38.7%, whereas female consumers totaled around 61.3%. It found that men have a lower propensity to buy clothing store brands compared to women. The age describes

**Table 2**  
Convergent validity and measurement model.

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
AFSS	0.946	0.947	0.959	0.824
PEP	0.942	0.942	0.958	0.852
PHY	0.944	0.944	0.957	0.818
PLC	0.928	0.930	0.946	0.778
PRC	0.917	0.918	0.942	0.802
PRD	0.915	0.916	0.940	0.797
PRM	0.876	0.877	0.915	0.730
PRO	0.905	0.908	0.934	0.780
SMM	0.986	0.986	0.986	0.672
SV	0.931	0.933	0.948	0.785
CR	0.851	0.857	0.900	0.692

Note: AFSS = after sale service; PEP = people; PHY = physical evidence; PLC = place; PRC = price; PRD = product; PRM = promotion; PRO = process; SMM = service marketing mix; SV = service value; CR = customer retention."

the knowledge about purchasing behaviors of people and it shows that older people have a higher consideration when purchasing clothes.

The above explains the demographical characteristics of the respondents: those in the age range of 36 to 45 years are 30.6%. The aptitude of customers in purchasing clothes is driven by having them as the personification of their pecuniary competences. The data in [Table 1](#) elucidates that customers of clothing brands imitated by consumers who have a per month salary from 5000 to 7000 (RMB) with a percentage rate of 24.7%. Currently, numerous clothing store brands with shops are available for reservations by consumers. Choice of brand-name clothes depends on how profoundly available the information is to the buyer. Clients with higher qualifications will be careful and more specific with their clothing reservation choices. Buyer developments in obtaining service clothing brands lead the respondents with a qualification level around 55.1%. This can be described that customers who utilize a service clothing brands reservation as having adequate information and can be applied as a foundation for creating service clothing purchases. The users also used a service clothing brands due to their matrimonial position and family offers have an excessive impact on buyer behavior. There is also the power of husbands, children and wives in the procurement of services. Buyer tendencies to purchase depend on several factors, like marital status ([Kotler et al., 2013](#)). [Table 1](#) denotes that purchase of services of clothing brands are influenced by consumers who are married, such as 51.2%. These situations clarify that the service clothing brands range offers a high petition to clients who have been conjugal since maximum modifications are intentionally shaped for the family service clothes. The type of work that is processed matches customer movement to out their situation ([Kotler et al., 2013](#)). The occupation of someone also influences consumption arrangements. Features of respondents by occupation subjugated by students, for example, equal 39.2%.

The number of times to buy clothes per month of the respondents shows that 11.7% have stayed with a specific clothing brand at least once per month while the majority of respondents 28.3% three times, 26.8% have bought clothing brands per month four times, 16.6% have bought clothing brands per month two times, while the remainder have bought clothing brands per month more than four times 15.6%.

The results in [Table 1](#) show how the respondents obtained their source of information about clothing store brands. Several response options were made available and the respondents were allowed to choose more than one option. A large portion of the respondents (272 respondents) obtained source information about clothing brands using online services and a total of 42 respondents received source information about clothing brands from friends. Meanwhile, 11 respondents got their source information about clothing brands via their relative(s). Lastly, 24 of the respondents got their source information by Advertisement and 33 of the respondents received their source information about clothing brands from others.

#### 4.2. Measurement model

[Table 2](#) "states that "latent variables" are defined by "convergence validity" of all loading factors and for all study variables, the value of (AVE) is greater than 0.5 and for all latent variables, the values of Composite Reliability are higher than the criterion of 0.7, which indicates that the eligible components retain reasonable reliability. In addition, applying "Cronbach's  $\alpha$ " reliability test, all latent values surpass 0.6, and this proof is sufficient to conclude that the study content has reasonable reliability. When evaluating the validity of discrimination, [Table 3](#) notes that AVE root square values are more than inter-structure correlations for all variables. So, it can be concluded that the measurement model has strong reliability and its validity to suggest the study variables are positive and accurate.

#### 4.3. Hypothesis test

The theory is that the service value (SV) has a positive and important effect on customer retention (CR), although this relationship is generally confirmed by literature. Similarly, the relation between these constructs was also important in

**Table 3**  
Discriminant Validity of Latent Constructs.

	AFSS	CR	PEP	PHY	PLC	PRC	PRD	PRM	PRO	SV
AFSS	0.908									
CR	0.797	0.832								
PEP	0.848	0.751	0.923							
PHY	0.875	0.807	0.834	0.904						
PLC	0.817	0.749	0.811	0.828	0.882					
PRC	0.749	0.712	0.735	0.807	0.784	0.895				
PRD	0.776	0.690	0.745	0.798	0.774	0.814	0.893			
PRM	0.811	0.739	0.801	0.842	0.839	0.816	0.800	0.854		
PRO	0.882	0.800	0.861	0.906	0.827	0.809	0.859	0.841	0.883	
SV	0.813	0.823	0.766	0.840	0.770	0.733	0.738	0.769	0.832	0.886

the sense of clothing service ( $\beta = 0.503$ , S.E. = 0.066,  $t = 7.573$ ,  $p < 0.000$ ). Despite of the very small number of customers having concerns about the acquisition of deals it is a high-quality and giant impact of SV on CR. Service customers believe that the value of both of the company's products must be perfect (use service) so that the scarcity of such feedback (the impact on the customer's desire to request or buy back the available goods and services) is an unreasonable CR event. Customers who feel happy appear to be a CR. SV may cause a provider to have an emotional affection and it generates excessive CR. Retention can be described as the loyalty of someone using the goods and services continuously provided through the organization.

The theory is that all aspects of the Service Marketing Mix (SMM) impact CR positively and significantly. The results indicate that, with a very good standardized estimation, the path coefficient from SMM to CR was statistically significant and obtained a high  $t$ -value for more than 2.58 ( $p < 0.000$ ). In addition R2 was significantly clarified at 0.753 for variation. The findings of the hypothesis testing indicate that all aspects of SMM had a significant positive effect on CR. Factors that have a positive influence and substantial SMM on CR, based on the findings of the identified sources of positive and negative effects of SMM on CR from the focus group tests. It was due to the clientele's belief that clothing brands have a superior travel experience, provide affordable rates, well executed promotions by completion of the sale, and readily accessible office workers. Employees who were responsible for clientele welfare along with sufficient facilities and infrastructure accessibility contributed to the activation and development of wide CR. The argument defined that it is not possible to obtain the establishment of CR by a single dimension but by all the dimensions inherent in the service marketing mix.

The hypothesis testing is that all of the positive SMM dimensions have a big effect on SV. Smart PLS 'result(s) showed that an important connotation existed between SMM and SV ( $p < 0.000$ ). Another statistical result is that the R2 for SV was to be 0.734, which was equivalent to a modest degree of variation compensated for by the marketing mix of services. The findings indicated that all of SMM's measurements had a major and beneficial effect on fabric brands SV. A variety of concerns that inspire SMM, focused on the implications of recognition organization discussions, have a high-quality and good-sized impact on SV. The findings of discussions conducted in a single workplace fabric brands recognized the SMM's constructive and enormous effect on SV. Typically, this was due to the fact the clothes were first-rate enterprises and that the customers can reap benefits from facts of detailed offerings. Furthermore, an efficient shopping system helped to positively impact a high interest and desire for customers to make a purchase of services and use offerings throughout the clothing industry.

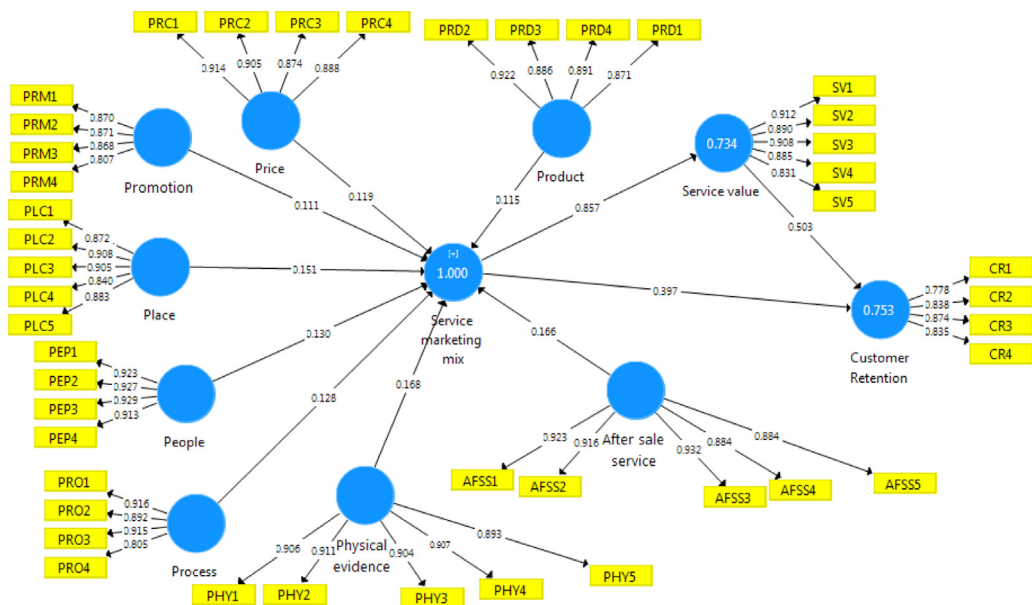
Looking at the effect of the SMM on CR, it can be verified by comparing the mediating variables of service value that the SMM which has a significant influence on SV and SV also has a significant impact on CR and SMM on CR. Since the regression and bootstrapping methods were implemented in tandem with service marketing, using CR and SV as a mediator variable, the size of the indirect effect of SV was reduced to  $\beta = 0.431$  and a statistically significant value was reached at  $t = 7.131$  ( $p < 0.000$ ) and after the standard error division, (S.E.) value = 0.060. The coefficient of direct path between the SMM and CR was reduced to  $\beta = 0.397$ , a meaningful path at level  $p < 0.000$ . Consequently, it verified that SV was a mediator between SMM and CR through complete mediation, and it expressed support for the H4 hypothesis. Table 4 shows the factor  $\beta$  for every direction. The data show that all of the findings of the experiment are linked to service reliability and customer satisfaction in a meaningful and optimistic way (see Figs. 2 and 3).

#### 4.4. Discussion

The study analyzed the impact of SMM on SV as well as the impact of SV on CR in the clothing brands industry in China. The study has been conducted with the help of primary data. Data has been collected with the help of questionnaires filled out by those people who bought brand-name clothes in China. This finding indicates that China's customers who purchase brand-name clothes believe that the clothing store brands are spacious and comfortable. Garment companies offer many services to the clothing industry such as offering a fabulous directory of choices for the world to enjoy. Garment companies also provide various technical services to assist garment companies with the design & manufacturing of clothing, footwear, and accessories. Also, the practitioners had to conserve their marketing such as Price equal to the benefits that you receive

**Table 4**  
Summary of hypotheses testing results for direct and indirect effect.

	Hypotheses	$\beta$	Sample Mean (M)	S.E	t-Value	P Values
H1	SMM → CR	0.397	0.391	0.070	5.659	<b>0.000</b>
H1a	AFSS → CR	0.066	0.065	0.012	5.694	<b>0.000</b>
H1b	PEP → CR	0.052	0.051	0.009	5.762	<b>0.000</b>
H1c	PHY → CR	0.067	0.066	0.012	5.560	<b>0.000</b>
H1d	PLC → CR	0.060	0.059	0.011	5.545	<b>0.000</b>
H1e	PRC → CR	0.047	0.046	0.009	5.457	<b>0.000</b>
H1f	PRD → CR	0.046	0.045	0.008	5.504	<b>0.000</b>
H1g	PRM → CR	0.044	0.044	0.008	5.680	<b>0.000</b>
H1h	PRO → CR	0.051	0.050	0.009	5.626	<b>0.000</b>
H2	SMM → SV	0.857	0.858	0.023	38.029	<b>0.000</b>
H2a	AFSS → SV	0.142	0.142	0.005	31.451	<b>0.000</b>
H2b	PEP → SV	0.112	0.112	0.004	27.088	<b>0.000</b>
H2c	PHY → SV	0.144	0.144	0.004	33.949	<b>0.000</b>
H2d	PLC → SV	0.130	0.130	0.005	25.707	<b>0.000</b>
H2e	PRC → SV	0.102	0.102	0.004	25.928	<b>0.000</b>
H2f	PRD → SV	0.099	0.099	0.004	24.900	<b>0.000</b>
H2g	PRM → SV	0.095	0.096	0.003	27.436	<b>0.000</b>
H2h	PRO → SV	0.110	0.110	0.003	33.477	<b>0.000</b>
H3	SV → CR	0.503	0.510	0.066	7.573	<b>0.000</b>
H4	SMM → SV → CR	0.431	0.437	0.060	7.131	<b>0.000</b>
H4a	AFSS → SV → CR	0.071	0.073	0.010	6.964	<b>0.000</b>
H4b	PEP → SV → CR	0.056	0.057	0.008	6.858	<b>0.000</b>
H4c	PHY → SV → CR	0.072	0.074	0.010	7.206	<b>0.000</b>
H4d	PLC → SV → CR	0.065	0.066	0.009	7.016	<b>0.000</b>
H4e	PRC → SV → CR	0.051	0.052	0.007	7.175	<b>0.000</b>
H4f	PRD → SV → CR	0.050	0.050	0.007	7.139	<b>0.000</b>
H4g	PRM → SV → CR	0.048	0.049	0.007	6.880	<b>0.000</b>
H4h	PRO → SV → CR	0.055	0.056	0.008	7.122	<b>0.000</b>



**Fig. 2.** Result of path coefficient  $\beta$  and  $R^2$  for direct relationship variables.

during your purchasing of clothes. Clothing services prices that are reasonable, such as prices for the services of delivery, entertainment and recreation were also deemed important. While promotional aspects were always interrelated and vital to the foundation of clothes brands, such as production of advertisement (e.g., electronic media/print media), and obtaining promotional prices from the clothes in comparison with the competition's pricing from other clothes, was also significant in a guest's decision making. China clothing customers had demonstrated that they desire physical evidence, such as the clothing atmosphere always be kept clean and comfortable. They also prefer the right staff, the professionalism of employees, the confidence of employees in serving customers and the management system to handle customer's concerns.

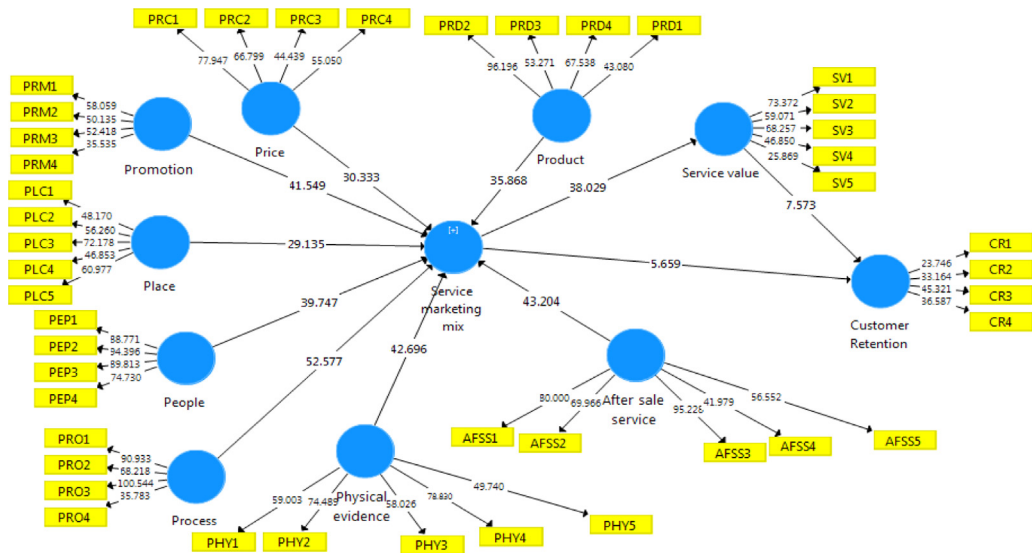


Fig. 3. PLS model path coefficient (bootstrapping at 500 resampling).

In addition to this finding, the primary causes that treats mixes of service marketing was extensively associated to SV and CR where the place and process reacted actively in moulding SMM for SV and CR assessment. Customers who purchased clothing brands in China felt that they would buy again from the same operator who provided a safe and secure environment, clean rooms where the facility is always well organized and clean. Moreover, the clothing operator who always ensured enough shopping for their customers as well as providing a convenient parking place would also enhance customer satisfaction. Guests also preferred friendly procedures, a systematic service process, access to advanced information technology (IT) for service processing and convenient ease of use for bookings and payments.

Additionally, they preferred after sale service calls to get feedback from the services, telephone calls to solve any problem(s), responding quickly to service requests and attractive after-sale service provided. Therefore, after sale service was an important dimension of the service marketing mix. The finding of the after-sale service dimension was positive and significant on brand-name clothes customer retention. These results, therefore, remind the practitioner to advance their understanding of the customer's needs in formulating SMM as they use these strategies to incorporate into their company's vision and mission statement.

Results indicated important and direct correlation among totally different SMM variables. SMM, SV and CR as found absolutely and considerably associated with one another. SV considerably acts as a mediating variable in explaining the impact of the SMM on CR. This suggests that the SMM real impact on CR is marketing. Further, the results indicated that everyone's dimensions absolutely and considerably impact SV. The results as in keeping with previous studies, as an example, (Hussein et al., 2020) and (Weijun et al., 2020) have additionally reported similar results.

## 5. Conclusion

As discussed earlier, there is one dimension integrated in this study, namely after sale service, which was integrated into the tradition. This research study showed that after sale service has a significant influence on SV and CR, since the after sale service dimension was important in the service marketing mix. Therefore, repeating and spreading this study in other regions of the world along with other services would test the usage of the present results.

The results of 385 usable questionnaires demonstrate that after sale service have a significant positive effect on CR through SV, both directly and indirectly, for clothing store brands. After sale service is an important dimension in the SMM that can be studied in other regions of the world offering clothing services. Moreover, the results provide a basis for additional validation of client behavior and are useful to grasp relationships among service selling combination, SV and CR. There is some data concerned with SMM, SV and CR; however, these selling terms studied show only occasional use in the clothing store brands field. Furthermore, there was an absence of proof of such analysis in China, particularly in the clothing service sector. The present study fulfills this gap.

In order to achieve justifiable growth, garment companies need to place emphasis on SV which leads in CR as specified in results of the study. The results are of use for policymakers and various high level experts in developing various plans and strategies for this sector. Furthermore, the study can be used by scholars of different industries and different places throughout the world.

Apart from the many unique aspects coupled with findings and implications in various contexts within organizations at the micro level and also for society at large, there are still limitations because of the wider scope of study which goes

beyond the borders. This study contains the respondents of China only, whereas the users of these services are living across the globe. Therefore, researchers, government institutions, regulatory bodies, academicians and policymakers as stakeholders should be vigilant in expanding and implementing the outcomes of the study. It would be a better study if the data was collected from different districts and countries. Future research can be carried out to study SMM, SV and CR in diverse industries. Comparative studies can also be helpful among different nations using these services to discover variations in SV and CR.

## 6. Implications of the study

### 6.1. Managerial implications

The present study showed that service marketing mix has a significant direct effect on service value and customer retention, but its elements respond differently. In this study, the dimensions of the product, people, after-sale service, plays a vital role in the service marketing mix, which influences customer's perception regarding service value in clothes services while all the dimensions of service marketing mix demonstrate a critical role in generating retention among clothes customers.

Secondly, customer retention is seen as a consequence of received service value. Therefore, managing customer retention is truly important as past studies recognized that customer retention still perform a central tendency of marketing services and management guidelines which leads to business success, high service performance, profitability, competitive advantage, customer retention, behavioral intention and trust (Kofi Nyarko et al., 2016; Verma and Singh, 2017; Wahab et al., 2016).

In managing customer retention, managers are advised to periodically measure and identify which features and benefits of the services they provided ought to be prioritized for customers. As retention is one of the outcomes from service consumption, managers are required to identify important features from the beginning stage to the end, for positive things about the clothing store brands to other people, refuse to change to another brands and service consumptions. Developing a consumption system approach is one of the ways where managers are able to monitor the process flow, be alert to any changes in customer behavior and respond to them. It enables managers to focus on the most important predictors of performance while providing inputs in designing marketing programs that effectively adapt to customers.

### 6.2. Theoretical implications

This study used service value as a mediating construct between service marketing mix and customer retention instead of emotion which was commonly applied in Mehrabian and Russell (1974) model of S-O-R. There are some rare studies that focused on mediation relationships. Thus, this study offers valuable findings that confirmed service value acts as a mediator between service marketing mix and customer retention through partial mediation.

Also the relationships diagrammatically illustrated in the research framework, which consists of the service marketing mix, service value and customer retention have not been tested in clothing store brands settings specifically in China. The information and findings contained in the present study provide a new contribution to academic knowledge by adding one more research input pertaining to consumer behavior in a service context.

## 7. Limitations

Although the results of the current study have shed light on several important issues, the study's limitations to a certain extent should be considered when interpreting the results. On the other hand, these limitations offer some opportunities for future studies to consider in order to gain additional knowledge on the issues investigated. This study focused on customer retention to represent the internal response of an individual as the outcome of behavior. Customer retention is not the end of a business objective. Numerous numbers of past studies verified that customer retention is one of the antecedents to other outcomes such as behavioral intention, retention, patronage, customer loyalty and word of mouth. Thus, this study outcome was limited to internal response only.

## CRedit authorship contribution statement

**Bestoon Othman:** Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Writing - original draft, Writing - review & editing. **He Weijun:** Conceptualization, Supervision. **Zhengwei Huang:** Data curation, Formal analysis, Supervision. **Jing Xi:** Formal analysis, Writing - review & editing. **Thomas Ramsey:** Writing - review & editing.

## Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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