SUSTAINABLE CONSUMER BEHAVIOR: THE INFLUENCE OF HABIT ON RELATIONAL BENEFITS AND BEHAVIORAL INTENTIONS IN PERSONAL SERVICE BUSINESSES

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ABSTRACT

Purpose- A crucial element of relationship marketing has always been the behavioral intention. However, in a personal service business, the way that habitual behavior moderates the relationship between relational benefits and intention to revisit has received little to no serious attention. The current study attempts to examine the moderating influence of habitual behaviour in the relationship between the dimensions of relational benefits and customer revisit intention in the beauty sector.
Methodology- Utilizing judgmental sampling technique, data was collected from 482 beauty salon customers in Cyprus. Using multiple regression analysis, moderated regression analysis, and subgroup analysis, the associations between constructs were tested.
Findings- The findings of this study indicate that all dimensions of rational benefits have a positive significant effect on the revisit intention. Furthermore, the outcomes reveal that habit positively influences the effect of relational benefits dimensions on the intention to revisit.
Conclusion- It can be concluded from outcomes of this study that, relational benefits is a source of the continuance intention and habit as a strong factor, sustain a relationship that is built based on satisfactory relational benefits between customers and service providers. Despite several limitations, the findings of this study theoretically and empirically contribute to the literature of relationship marketing ans customer behavior. In addition, the managerial implications and recommendations of this paper expand the views of practitioners and researchers in personal service businesses for future focus.

Keywords: relational benefits revisit intention, habitual behaviour, beauty industry, personal service business, business sustainability.
JEL Codes: M30, M12, D83

1. INTRODUCTION

The significance of customer relationship management (CRM) has been increasingly emphasized by industry practitioners and researchers in the current highly competitive environment (Bohling et al., 2006; Khan et al., 2020). The service industry has been identified as a relationship-oriented sector (Brady & Cronin, 2001); therefore, the service provider-customer relationship is the primary basis for building, evaluating, and developing service performance, and vice versa (Liang et al., 2018; Darzi & Bhat, 2018).

Therefore, the "relationship" is a key term in the service business whereby it is possible to achieve business sustainability by focusing on the customer-service provider social exchange during service delivery (Grönroos, 1995; S. W. Chou & Hsu, 2016). Due to the fact that maintaining current loyal customers is less costly and time-consuming in comparison with attracting new ones (Reichheld & Sasser, 1990), maintaining and enhancing the relationship with existing customers as a unique value is highly recommended in the competitive market (Antwi, 2021; Sohaib, 2022). In light of this, relationship continuum strategies have been highlighted for academics as well as marketers (Peterson, 1995; Payne & Frow, 2017). To implement such strategies more effectively, it is recommended that the relationship between the customer and service provider and also the customers' behavioral intentions are thoroughly understood (Liang et al., 2018; Darzi & Bhat, 2018; Janssens et al., 2020).

The failure or success in a relationship between service providers and their clients can largely be explained by two proposed approaches according to relationship marketing studies: "relationship quality" and "relational benefits" (Hennig-Thurau et

al., 2002). Relationship quality refers to an evaluation of customer loyalty based on the degree of relationship appropriateness from the customer perspective (e.g., Crosby et al., 1990; Dorsch et al., 1998). The relational benefits approach has been conceptualized as the loyalty determination of customers given the values that are received or perceived in their relationship with the service provider during service delivery (e.g., Bendapudi & Berry, 1997; Beatty et al., 1996; Gwinner et al., 1998).

Relational benefits are considered a key element of customer behavioral intention in the service business (e.g., Lee et al., 2008; Najjar & Najar, 2022; Dandis et al., 2022). Although the relational benefits directly affect customer behavioral intention, it has been suggested that there may be a moderator between them (Y. K. Lee et al., 2008). The author argues that no previous study has been conducted to explore the condition that relational benefits may have a greater or lesser influence on behavioral intention in different circumstances (Y. K. Lee et al., 2008). Following this argument, this study suggests that customers' revisit intentions may depend on the degree of habit of the customers in the relationship with their service providers. Support for this assumption is that, habit as an unconscious state of mind has been determined as an important factor predicting/influencing customer behavior intention in customer relationship management studies (Jones et al., 2000; Amoroso & Lim, 2017; Nguyen et al., 2022). Therefore, this study aims to examine whether habit as a moderator will affect the path between relational benefits and customer revisit intention in a personal service business with a particular focus on the hairdresser-client relationship. The beauty salon service is important due to the high level of interaction and the intense frequency of visits between customers and their hairdressers compared with other service businesses (Dagger et al., 2011; Chou & Chen, 2018). The relationships in a proposed model were examined based on valid data collected from 482 customers of beauty salons in Nicosia, Cyprus in January and February of 2023.

The paper is organized as follows: Section 2 presents a review of the previous studies and develops the hypotheses using a conceptual framework. Section 3 includes the methodology encompassing the sample of the study, data collection techniques, questionnaire constructs, and the data analysis methods. The results and interpretation of the analyses are reported in Section 4. Finally, Section 5 discusses the managerial and theoretical implications, limitations of the current study and recommendations for future studies.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Revisit Decision Making (RDM)

Customer loyalty has been viewed from various perspectives. As an example, customer loyalty can be explained by repurchase/revisit intention, which is a behaviour developed by a customer. This intention behaviour is resulted from all the experiences that customers have gained while using a products or receiving services from providers (Fida et al., 2020). The concept of purchase decision-making has been the subject of numerous studies over the years, which have demonstrated the significance of this subject in marketing studies (e.g., Jones et al., 2000; Fang et al., 2011; Anshu et al., 2022). Repurchase intention is summarized as an individual's decision to continue purchasing a product or service from the same seller, store, or service provider in the future after evaluating previous experiences (Chiu et al., 2012; Tian et al., 2022). In the service industry, the optimistic likelihood that a client will decide to use the same service from the same service provider on a subsequent visit is known as the intention to repurchase (Hellier et al., 2003; Chou & Chen, 2018). Revisit intention is a notion that is similar to repurchase intention in that it describes a customer's willingness to return to the same location, person, or institution after a positive experience (Chien, 2017). In the context of services, the revisit intention is assessed based on the extent to which the client is willing to return to the same service provider, like a hairdresser (Chou and Chen, 2018), or service center, like a hotel or restaurant (Luturlean et al., 2018; Rajput & Gahfoor, 2020). To establish a sustainable relationship for retaining loyal customers, serious focus has always been on investigating and examining the determinants of customer revisit intention in the service studies (Abubakar et al., 2017).

2.2. Relational Benefits

When customers buy, use, or consume a specific good or service, they expect desired benefits that can meet their needs. The benefits received by each customer vary since they depend on individual attributes and perceptions of the product or service benefits. It has been suggested there might be some additional benefits apart from consuming a product or using a service itself that are likely to be received from the relationship between exchange parties. The benefits obtained from the relationship between a service provider and customers in a long-lasting relationship are called "Relational Benefits" (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). The relational benefits potentially build and enhance the service provider-customer experiences and relationships (Gwinner et al., 1998; Gremler et al., 2019). In a long-term relationship, the impact of these benefits varies over time depending on how frequently the clients use the specific good or service (Dagger and O'Brien, 2010). Consequently, relational benefits are expected to improve the existing relationship between service encounters and customers, increasing relationship sustainability over time (Dagger et al., 2011). This will lead to the return of high values, including high sales, high revenue, profitability, and sustainability for the business (Gwinner et al., 1998; Lee et al., 2013; Dandis et al., 2023).

To identify the characteristics of relational benefits, numerous studies have been carried out. For instance, it has been suggested that clients may receive a variety of relational benefits from their relationship with a service provider, including

social, psychological, financial, and customized benefits (Gwinner et al., 1998). Over time, the dimensions of relational benefits have been categorized, modified, and renamed to the three main categories of confidence benefits, social benefits, and special treatment benefits (Gwinner et al., 1998). Most of the recent studies in the related area have followed the new categorization due to the satisfactory validity and reliability outcomes (e.g., Hennig-Thurau et al., 2002; Ruiz-Molina et al., 2009; S. Chou & Chen, 2018). The psychological side of the service provider-customer relationship is explained by confidence benefits. These advantages raise customers' sense of comfort and security while lowering their levels of anxiety and uncertainty. As a result, there is a mutual understanding between the client and the service provider in a relationship (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). Social benefits, which are the emotional aspect of a relationship, expand the friendship relationship between customers and the service provider (Ruiz-Molina et al., 2009) by giving clients a greater sense of familiarity, personal recognition, and social support from the service provider (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Gwinner et al., 1998). Special treatment benefits are the benefits that a customer exclusively receives from a service provider compared to other customers; these special benefits can include discounts, premium prices, free use of service (financial benefits), faster delivery of services or individualized services (customized benefits) (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Yen & Gwinner, 2003). Customers who receive these kinds of benefits feel unique, superior, and more valuable in comparison to others (Chou and Chen, 2018).

In the literature, the significant relationship between relational benefits' dimensions, satisfaction and behavioral intention has been highlighted (Dimitriadis & Koritos, 2014; Gao et al., 2023). For instance, relational benefits were suggested to be a significant factor influencing customer loyalty and continuance intention in the service industry (Gremler & Gwinner, 2000; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2002). It was highlighted specifically that confidence benefits are the most important type of benefits in face-to-face encounters, which affect loyalty and encourage the customer to stay in the relationship (Chou and Chen, 2018). Unique values that customers receive from service providers in a long-lasting relationship decrease the customers' willingness to switch their service provider/service center and consequently persuade them to continue and maintain the relationship (Berry, 1995; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2002). In the service sector, the results of empirical studies have confirmed the positive relationship between the dimensions of relational benefits, such as confidence benefits and special treatment benefits, and customer loyalty and intention to continue the relationship (Yen & Gwinner, 2003; Najjar & Najar, 2022; Dandis et al., 2023). With a focus on several personal services business, the three types of relations benefits including confidence benefits, social benefits, and special treatment benefits were found to be predictors of customer intention to revisit the service provider (S. Chou & Chen, 2018). Given the preceding arguments, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

H1: Confidence benefits have significant positive effect on revisit intention.

H2: Social benefits have a significant positive effect on revisit intention.

H3: Special treatment benefits have a significant positive effect on revisit intention.

2.3. Moderating Role of Habitual Behavior

Habit is the unconscious state of mind that has been recognised as a cause of the automatic reaction and responses of an individual towards a certain activity (Triandis, 1980) without any rational pre-evaluation in a specific situation (Khalifa & Liu, 2007). Habit has been discussed as a particular action or response based on the previous experience of a person in similar circumstances to reach a certain goal (Verplanken et al., 1997). In the service context, habit refers to the behavioral tendency that results from the positive experience of customers in their previous purchasing without the conscious thought process, leading to the purchase of the same good or service (Chiu et al., 2012; Limayem et al., 2007). Therefore, customer purchasing habit mirrors the service provider's interaction performance in the relationship with customers, which is built and developed based on the satisfactory experience of customers (Verplanken & Aarts, 1999; Polites & Karahanna, 2013; S. W. Chou & Hsu, 2016). In a formed relationship, the positive experience a customer gains from the service provider's performance is likely to be a source of purchasing/using habits, which consequently results in post-experience behavior (Verplanken & Aarts, 1999; Polites & Karahanna, 2013; S. W. Chou & Hsu, 2016). The literature suggests that there are three possible explanations for the relationship between habit and behavioral intention: the direct impact of habit (Alalwan, 2020; Gunden et al., 2020), moderating role of habit (Hsu et al., 2015; S. W. Chou & Hsu, 2016; Nguyen et al., 2022), and mediating effect of habit (Mouakket, 2015; Amoroso & Lim, 2017). In this study, the moderating role of habit is examined.

The findings of prior research have demonstrated that habit plays a moderating function in the relationship between behavioral intentions such as intention to repurchase and its determinants (e.g. Hsu et al., 2015; S. W. Chou & Hsu, 2016; Nguyen et al., 2022). Significant evidence has been found indicating that, in the context of services, habit plays a moderating role between behavioral intentions and their antecedents, such as trust and commitment (Agag and El-Masry, 2016). Habit was also reported to be a strong factor boosting the relationship between repurchase intention and its antecedents including satisfaction and trust (Hsu et al., 2015). Relational benefits, as the crucial predictors of revisit intention and loyalty (Lee et al., 2008; Dagger & O'Brien, 2010; Dagger et al., 2011; S. Chou & Chen, 2018), are assumed to be influenced by habit in a long-lasting relationship. These considerations lead to the following hypotheses:

H4: Habit positively moderates the confidence benefits and revisit intention association.

H5: Habit positively moderates the social benefits and revisit intention association.

H6: Habit positively moderates the special treatment benefits and revisit intention association.

Given the findings of the literature review and variables relationships, this study proposes the following research framework (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework
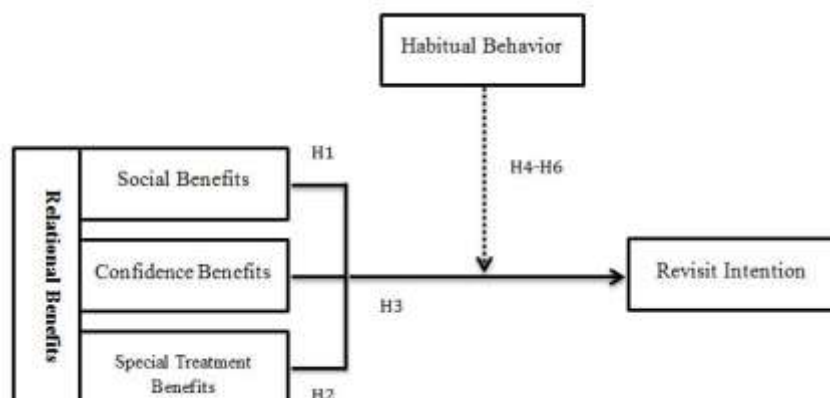
3. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. Population and Sample

For this study, the personal service business and target population were determined to be the hairdressing services and their visitors, respectively. Three factors formed the basis of the reasoning for focusing on the hairdressing salons in the chosen population. First, several researches have been conducted recently to study beauty salons' services, and the results have highlighted the importance of this service (e.g. Vázquez-Carrasco & Foxall, 2006; Dagger & O'Brien, 2010; Garzaniti et al., 2011; S. Chou & Chen, 2018; H. W. Lee & Kim, 2019). Secondly, the outcomes of previous studies have revealed that the level of customer-service provider interactions as well as the intensity of frequent visits were highest in hairdressing services compared to personal service businesses (Dagger & O'Brien, 2010; S. Chou & Chen, 2018). Therefore, this service is well-suited for an accurate investigation to examine the role of relational benefits and habit in the service relationship, since interactions and the frequency of visits are the core of the concepts of both relational benefits and habit. Thirdly, the recent statistics reported by the European Union illustrated that Cyprus has witnessed rapid growth in the beauty industry, which consequently increases and continues the demand for investing in this industry (Eurostat, 2023). In terms of the employment share of hairdressers and beauticians, Cyprus is ranked highest among EU members (2.3% share of total employment), followed by Malta and Portugal (both 1.3%), Ireland, Greece, Spain, and Italy (all 1.2%) (Eurostat, 2023). All these facts determine the uniqueness of beauty salon services and the importance of service provider-customer relationship quality and sustainability.

3.2. Data Collection and Questionnaire Construct

This paper's goal was achieved by using a quantitative research analysis approach along with a questionnaire survey to test the suggested model. The data were collected in January and February of 2024 via a self-administered questionnaire. To verify the validity and reliability of the research instruments, a pilot study with a sample of 30 respondents was conducted as the first phase. Consequently, to improve the instrument's reliability and reword and shorten the survey questions, several minor adjustments were made. A total of 500 questionnaires were distributed to the hairdressing salons' visitors using the judgmental sampling technique (non-probability). A total of 482 questionnaires were returned, providing a satisfactory respondent rate (98%). The respondents who had switched hairstylists in the preceding 12 months were extracted and eliminated using a filter question. Therefore, 28 responses were removed and a total of 454 valid questionnaires were considered for data analysis.

 The survey was divided into two sections. The first is the demographics part, including age, income, marital status, level of education, frequency of visit and a filter question. The second part is the constructs and items in survey questionnaire. The demographic data of the respondents are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Respondents' Demographic Profile

Measure	Item	Frequency (N=482)	(%)
Gender	male	226	46.9
	female	256	53. 1
Age	below 21	24	24.0
	21 - 30	170	37.3
	31- 40	182	35.7
	41- 50	78	16.2
	51- 60	28	5.8
	61- above	0	0
Education level	less than bachelor's	10	2.1
	bachelor's	173	35.9
	master's and above	299	62.0
Marital status	signal	280	58.1
	married	202	41.9
Visit frequency per year	< 3 times	2	0.4
	3-6 times	20	4.1
	6-9 times	110	22.8
	9-12 times	192	39.8
	>12 times	158	32.8
Changed within the last year	yes	28	5.8
	no	454	94.2

According to the results, over 94.2% of the participants did not switch their hairstylists during the year before the data collection period (the last 12 months). In addition, the highest frequency of visits was recorded for 9-12 (39.8%) times per year, which reveals a high level of interaction between clients and hairdressers. Furthermore, the results illustrated that more than half of the participants were female (53.1%), and in terms of age, most of them were between 21 and 30 years old (37.3%). According to the education level, the respondents held at least a master's degree (62 %) indicating a well-educated profile of participants. Most of the participants were single (58.1%)

3.3. Measures

The construct and items of questionnaire were borrowed from the early studies in related literature. The dimensions of relational benefits were measured by 16 items adopted from Vázquez-Carrasco and Foxall (2006). Habit was measured by 4 items adapted from Chiu et al. (2012). Finally, 4 items adapted from Chen et al. (2017) were used to evaluate revisit intention. Constructs and related items in the questionnaire are presented in Table 2. Each item of the constructs was given a minor adjustment to bring them into line with the context of hair salon services. Each construct was assessed using five-point Likert-type questions (1 reflected "strongly disagree" and 5 reflected "strongly agree"). The items, constructs and reference of each source are presented in Appendix A.

3.4. Data Analysis

The data were analyzed and the relationships between the constructs in the suggested model were tested using the legitimate and dependable statistical tool, SPSS (version 24 modified with PROCESS macro v.4.2). Cronbach's α, composite reliability (CR), average variance extracted (AVE) tests were used in order to assess the construct validity and reliability. To check whether the item of each construct should be removed, exploratory factor analysis was run. Multiple regression analysis, moderated regression analysis and sub-group analyses were performed to measure the association between relational benefits and revisit intention.

3.4.1. Multiple Regression Analysis

The linear relationship between relational benefits and revisit intention was tested by performing multiple regression analysis. As prerequisites before regression, the correlation coefficient and indices of Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) to check the multicollinearity have been observed. The result of Pearson's bivariate correlations showed that coefficient values were less than 0.8 ($p<0.000$), which demonstrated a sufficient correlation among the variables (Schober & Schwarte, 2018). In addition, the outcomes of the VIF test were between 1 and 2, thus indicating that the independent variables are not highly correlated with each other (O'Brien, 2007; Kim, 2019). Therefore, the adequacy of correlation among the independent variables was confirmed to run the regression analysis. The results for these values are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: The VIF and Correlation Coefficient among Variables

Construct	VIF	1	2	3	4	5
1. Confidence benefits	1.315	1.000				
2. Social benefits	1.304	0.482*	1.000			
3. Special treatment benefits	1.010	0.231**	0.582**	1.000		
4. Habit	1.409	0.444*	0.385**	0.409**	1.000	
5. Revisit intention	1.185	0.402*	0.369**	0.525**	0.449**	1.000

Note: (**) p<0.05, (*) p<0.1

3.4.2. Moderate Regression Analysis

The moderating effect of habit on the association between relations benefits and revisit intention was examined using moderated regression analysis (MRA). The procedure of MRA is as follows:

$$Y = a + b1 * X + b2 * Z \tag{1}$$

$$Y = a + b1 * X + b2 * Z + b3 * (X*Z) \tag{2}$$

Where Y = revisit intention, X = relational benefits, Z =habit, a, b1, and b2 = constants

Habit will be a significant moderator if the variance (R2) in Equation 2 is increased relatively compared to Equation 1 given to effect of the interaction term of relational benefits and habit (X*Z). (Sharma et al., 1981). According to the results, if habit does not significantly moderate the relationship between relational benefits and revisit intention, it is suggested that sub-group analysis should be conducted to accurately check the moderating role of habit in each sub-group (Y. K. Lee et al., 2008). However, on the other hand, sub-group analysis was also employed in the condition the moderating role was reported significant (Lin et al., 2017).

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

4.1. Exploratory Factor Analysis

The dimensionality of all constructs was evaluated by principal component factor analysis using varimax rotation. The KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) and Bartlett's test of sphericity were checked to ensure the appropriateness of items and constructs. The results of the test showed the overall measure of sampling adequacy (MSA) with a value of 0.894 for KMO, which was greater than the acceptable limit of 0.5. In addition, Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant at the level of p<0.01, which indicated that factor analysis compressed the data in a meaningful way with a significant correlation among variables (Hair et al., 2010). Due to the large sample size, the varimax rotation method was used to extract the factors. Furthermore, an Eigenvalue greater than 1 was chosen to extract the five factors given the variables in the model of study. According to the results, the first component explained 39.13% of the total variance of all components. In the EFA analysis in this study, the results of the component rotated matrix significantly confirmed that component COB could be measured by 6 items, component SOB by 5 items, SPTB by 5 items, and HAB and REI by 4 items, respectively. According to the significant results, no item was removed from the constructs. Therefore, five constructs in total containing 24 components (items) were confirmed for the rest of the analysis. The results of the extracted factors are reported in Table 3.

Table 3: The Indicators of Exploratory Factor Analysis, Reliability and Validity

Construct	Item	Mean	EFA	AVE	CR	Cronbach's α
Confidence Benefits (COB)	COB1	4.13	0.93	0.70	0.93	0.95
	COB2	4.29	0.72			
	COB3	4.15	0.92			
	COB4	4.16	0.83			
	COB5	4.23	0.92			
	COB6	4.33	0.74			
Social Benefits (SOB)	SOB1	4.38	0.72	0.60	0.88	0.87
	SOB2	4.49	0.72			
	SOB3	3.43	0.79			
	SOB4	4.83	0.69			
	SOB5	4.37	0.88			
Special Treatment Benefits (STB)	SPTB1	4.08	0.86	0.58	0.87	0.94
	SPTB2	4.04	0.85			
	SPTB3	3.78	0.91			
	SPTB4	3.59	0.87			

	SPTB5	3.83	0.91		
Habit (HAB)	HAB1	4.20	0.84	0.82	0.94	0.97
	HAB2	4.21	0.93		
	HAB3	4.10	0.87		
	HAB4	4.24	0.82		
Revisit Intention (REI)	REI1	4.26	0.69	0.80	0.94	0.91
	REI2	4.26	0.78		
	REI3	4.27	0.64		
	REI4	4.37	0.61		

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization

4.2. Reliability and Validity

The values of Cronbach's α and composite reliability (CR) were checked to assess the internal consistency. According to the findings, all values ranged from 0.87-0.97 for Cronbach's alpha and 0.87-0.94 for CR, and exceeded the acceptable threshold of 0.07 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Nunnally, 1975). As a result, all constructs' internal consistency was sufficient, confirming the research's desired reliability (Table 3)

According to earlier research, the CR and AVE values should be greater than 0.7 and 0.5, respectively, in order to ensure convergent validity (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). The test results showed that all of the CR and AVE indices in the measurement model surpassed the acceptable limit, confirming the sufficient convergent validity (Table 3).

Furthermore, discriminant validity was verified using the pairwise construct comparison method proposed by Fornell and Larcker (1981). When the square roots of the AVE for each construct (diagonal indices in the matrix) are greater than the values of a construct's correlation coefficient with other constructs (off-diagonal indices), discriminant validity is verified. To corroborate the discriminant validity of the constructs, the Heterotrait–Monotrait ratio (HTMT) was also examined as support (Cohen, 1988; Tian et al., 2022). The outcome indices demonstrated that there was no discriminant validity due to the HTMT values being lower than the accepted limit of 0.9 (Henseler et al., 2015). As a result, the discriminant and convergent validity were confirmed. Table 4 displays the pairwise construct comparison matrix and HTMT test results.

Table 4: The Discriminant Validity Indicators

Fornell and Larcker test					
Constructs	**COB**	**SOB**	**SPTB**	**HAB**	**REI**
COB	*0.836*				
SOB	0.455	*0.774*			
SPTB	0.554	0.630	*0.761*		
HAB	0.582	0.356	0.503	*0.905*	
REI	0.664	0.420	0.566	0.756	*0.894*
Heterotrait–Monotrait ratio (HTMT) test					
Constructs	**COB**	**SOB**	**SPTB**	**HAB**	**REI**
COB	-				
SOB	0.712	-			
SPTB	0.442	0.624	-		
HAB	0.451	0.511	0.492	-	
REI	0.587	0.468	0.433	0.517	-

Notes: italic-bold indices are the squared root of AVE. Below the diagonal represent correlations' coefficients; level of significance is p<0.05.

4.3. Testing of Hypotheses

The outcomes of the multiple regression analysis showed that the standard regression coefficient for confidence benefits (β= 0.619 t-value = 16.047, p < 0.001), social benefits (β = 0.112, t-value = 2.912, p <0.001), and special treatment benefits (β = 0.058, t-value = 2.820, p < .001) are significant in explaining the revisit intention (Table 5). The explained variance (R^2) of revisit intention was 0.58 indicating a good effect size of R^2, since it is higher the acceptable value of 0.50 (Ozili, 2022) . Therefore, H1, H2 and H3 are supported.

Table 5: The Outcomes of Multiple Regression Analysis

Construct	Beta (β)	t-value	p-value
COB	.0619***	16.047	0.000
SOB	.0112***	2.912	0.004

SPTB	.0058***	.2820	0.005
R	0.67		
R²	.058		
Adjusted R²	.055		
F-ratio	135.356 ***		

Note: (***) p<0.001, (**) p<0.05; (*) p<0.1

Customer revisit intention was used as the dependent variable in the moderated regression analysis using PROCESS macro, and habit was used as a moderating variable to examine the moderating effect. The results of the regression reported indicated that, given the F-value associated with R2 change, a remarkable difference was validated in the variances of the regression equations in model 1(Baseline model) and model 2 (Constrained model), thus confirming a significant effect of the interaction term on revisit intention (Zedeck, 1971). Thus, habit plays a pure moderating role in the relationship (Sharma et al., 1981) between relational benefits and revisit intention. Therefore, H4-H6 are significantly supported. The outcomes of the moderated regression analysis are shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Moderated Regression Analysis of the Effect of Habit

	Model 1 (Baseline model)		Model 2 (Constrained model)	
	β	t-value	β	t-value
COB	0.619***	16.047	.018***	0.648
SOB	0.112***	2.912	0.314**	8.655
SPTB	0.058***	2.820	0.066	2.141
HAB			0.548	16.154
COB * HAB			0.563***	7.392
SOB * HAB			0.455***	2.875
SPTB * HAB			0.402***	-2.886
R²	0.58		0.65	
Adjusted R²	0.55		0.64	
ΔR2	0.000			
F-value	222.306**			
F-value for Incremental R2	0.000			

Note: (***) p<0.001, (**) p<0.05; (*) p<0.1; β: standardized coefficients

Although the correlations between habit and the independent variables were significant (Table 6) and the pure moderating effect was confirmed, the sub-group analyses were conducted to specify the effect of the low and high habit groups as a moderator between relational benefits and revisit intention (Hsu et al., 2015; Agag & El-Masry, 2016; Lin et al., 2017). As a result, the respondents were divided into two subgroups, "low-habit" (n = 218) and "high-habit" (n = 236), according to their responses to each of the habit items in the questionnaire. The analysis was conducted using these two sets of respondents. The results are displayed in Table 7.

Table 7: Statistical Comparison of Paths for Subgroup Analysis of the Effect of Habit

	Law-habit (n=236)		High-Habit (n=218)		Statistical comparison
	r	Z	r	Z	z
COB	0.352*	0.368	0.425**	0.480	1.755
SOB	0.207*	0.224	0.319**	0.387	1.736
SPTB	0.144*	0.118	0.198**	0.211	1.709

Note: (***) p<0.001, (**) p<0.05; (*) p<0.1; r= correlation coefficient; Z: z-score

The outputs indicated that the values of the correlation coefficient for the high-habit group (COB to REI: r= 0.425, p < 0.05; SOB to REI: r=0.319, p < 0.05; STPB to REI: r= 0.198, p < 0.05) are higher than the low-habit group (COB to REI: r= 0.352, p < 0.1; SOB to REI: :r=0.207, p < 0.1; STPB to REI : r= 0.144, p < 0.1). These results demonstrated that habit strongly influenced the relationships between relational benefits' dimensions and revisit intention for the respondents with higher habitual behaviour. The results of hypotheses are presented in Table 8.

Table 8: Results of Hypotheses

H	Hypothesis statement	Level	Result
H1	Confidence benefits have significant positive effect on revisit intention.	Significant	Supported

H2	Social benefits have a significant positive effect on revisit intention.	Significant	Supported
H3	Special treatment benefits have a significant positive effect on revisit intention.	Significant	Supported
H4	Habit positively moderates the confidence benefits and revisit intention association.	Significant	Supported
H5	Habit positively moderates the social benefits and revisit intention association.	Significant	Supported
H6	Habit positively moderates the special treatment benefits and revisit intention association.	Significant	Supported

5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The objective of this study was to examine the relationships between dimensions of relational benefit, habit, and revisit intention in hairdressing services as a personal business service. The empirical findings indicated a significant correlation between all relational benefits dimensions and the customers' intention to revisit. Sequentially, confidence benefits (β = 0.619, t-value = 16.047, p < 0.001), social benefits (β = 0.112, t-value = 2.912, p <0.001), and special treatment benefits (β = 0.058, t-value = 2.820, p < 0.001) affect the revisit intention. These findings are consistent with previous studies in the service industry (e.g. W. Kim & Ok, 2009; S. Chou & Chen, 2018; Najjar & Najar, 2022; Dandis et al., 2023). First, the results suggested that greater emphasis should be placed on the confidence benefits in the service delivery, as these are likely to be generated by enhancing security or lowering anxiety to build a sense of trust and increase the likelihood that clients will stay in contact with their service providers. As a result, customers are more likely to repeat the behavioral intention, like revisiting the same hairdresser (Garzaniti et al., 2011). The anxiety of customers can be reduced by providing a proper service according to the customer's expectations. In addition, the customers' feeling of security can be achieved by paying timely attention to their needs and expectations and the employees' (hairdressers) constantly showing them concern regarding customers' rights during the service delivery. Second, hairdressing salons' managers and marketers should pay more attention to social benefits as another important factor influencing the intention of customers to revisit. The likelihood that the service provider will persuade a customer to make a decision by instilling confidence in them increases with increased familiarity, frequent personal recognition, and the development of a cordial relationship. As a result, the customer may feel more committed to the service and service provider, feel more satisfied, and have a higher intention to return. Finally, there should be a rise in the benefits associated with special treatment; for instance, clients can be given special treatment, expedited service or special discounts which give them the sense of being valued in order to boost their sense of distinction in comparison to other clients receiving the same service. Therefore, salon managers/hairdressers should frequently design special services, and offer and deliver them to their customers. The more the special services are personalized for an individual, the higher the possibility a customer will consider the current beauty salon/hairdresser as a priority for future visits during the decision-making process.

Above all, this study demonstrated how habit plays a critical role in sustaining the relationship between clients and service providers over an extended period. The results of this study supported the theory that an unconscious mind may affect the process of decision-making regarding a future visit, particularly when a relationship is established and maintained based on satisfactory relational benefits that customers received during the service delivery from their service providers. These findings support the outcomes of previous studies (e.g. Chiu et al., 2012; Keiningham et al., 2015; Agag & El-Masry, 2016). Therefore, it is suggested that hairdressers encourage clients to frequently visit the hair salon once the relationship has developed and reached a sufficient level based on the relational benefits. For example, beauty salons/hairdressers could motivate customers to return to the salons in the future by providing/offering attractive benefits (socially, specially, and confidently). Habit as a strong factor can support and sustain a relationship that is built based on satisfactory relational benefits. Managers and service providers are recommended to increase relationships/interactions level with their current customers focusing on relational benefits as a factor that influences customers' unconscious mind for future decisions.

6. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE STUDIES

Despite the study's significant contributions, it has certain limitations that should be addressed in future research. First of all, the present study was carried out using data collected from Cyprus's capital city, which has limited available beauty salons compared to larger cities. As a result, the validity and reliability of the findings are likely to be affected due to clients' lack of a large number of alternatives to switch their hairdressers. Future research should therefore focus on fiercely competitive markets with more readily available and easily accessible comparable service centers. Second, only users of the service for a specified period (12 months) were included in the sample for this study. Subsequent researchers have the option to extend the duration of service usage to conduct a longitudinal analysis of the effect of relationship duration on behavioral intention. Thirdly, it is advised that future efforts adopt more items from various sources while also adjusting and validating the constructs. Finally, future research can concentrate on one or more other personal service businesses, like fast food restaurants, clothing stores, travel agencies, movie theaters, banks, etc. to increase the generalizability of the results.

7. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to determine whether the dimensions of relational benefit affect customer revisit intention and how this effect depends on the moderator variable of habit. A total number of 482 valid data was collected from the visitors of hairdressing salons in Nicosia, Cyprus. Employing multiple regression analysis, moderated regression analysis (MRA), and subgroup analysis, the empirical findings indicated a significant correlation between all relational benefits dimensions and the customers' intention to revisit. Also, the results revealed that habit significantly influenced the relationships between the dimensions of relational benefits and revisit intention. Although few limitations were reported, this study contributes to the literature on relationship marketing and customer behavior in the service industry. Additionally, the findings of this study can be a guidance for future managerial decisions in personal services business particularly beauty salon services in the line of attracting new customers and enhancing relationships with loyal customers.

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APPENDIX
Constructs and items of the questionnaire

Construct	Measurement Statements	References
Confidence Benefits	1. I believe there is less risk that something will go wrong in this service provider's performance. 2. I feel I can trust this service provider(s). 3. I have more confidence that the service will be performed correctly by this service provider(s). 4. When I receive the service from this service provider(s), I have less anxiety. 5. I know what to expect when visiting this service provider(s). 6. I receive the highest level of service from this service provider(s).	(Vázquez-Carrasco & Foxall, 2006)
Social Benefits	1. This service provider(s) recognizes me well. 2. I know this service provider(s) well. 3. I have developed a friendship with this service provider(s) 4. This service provider(s) remembers my name. 5. I enjoy the social aspects of the relationship with this service provider(s).	(Vázquez-Carrasco & Foxall, 2006)
Special Treatment Benefits	1. I receive discounts from this service provider(s) that most customers do not receive 2. I am offered services with better prices by this provider(s). 3. I receive special services from this service provider(s) that most customers do not receive. 4. This service provider(s) prioritizes my name in the appointments list. 5. I receive faster service than most customers.	(Vázquez-Carrasco & Foxall, 2006)
Habit	1. Vising this service provider(s) has become a routine for me 2. Visiting this service provider(s) is something I do without thinking.	(Chiu et al., 2012)

	3. It makes me feel weird if I do not visit this service provider(s) in the future. 4. I have been visiting this service provider(s) for a long time.	
Revisit Intention	1. I would revisit this hairdresser again in the near future. 2. I am interested in revisiting this hairdresser's again. 3. I will come back again. 4. There is a likelihood that I will revisit in the future.	(Chen et al., 2017)