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**A Study of Exploring the Identification Relationships between
Consumers and Companies**

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A Study of Exploring the Identification Relationships between
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摘要

對公司來說，開發新客戶的成本往往是留住舊客戶的成本的好幾倍。此外，舊客戶的購買力很有可能比新客戶還要強。因此，越來越多的公司試圖和客戶建立長期的關係，以謀取客戶再度光顧或做其他對公司有利的行為。

「消費者-公司認同」的概念已用於限定消費者與公司之間深厚的、具有意義的、和長期的合作關係。本研究分析「消費者-公司認同」的前因和後果，我們提出「消費者-公司認同」可能經由高度的「獨特性識別」、「聲望識別」導致。再者，高度的「消費者-公司認同」應可增強消費者在該公司消費後的「再購意願」以及日後對親友的「口碑」行銷。

以近期在台灣地區具有百貨公司消費經驗的消費者為對象進行問卷調查，期間回收有效問卷共 294 份。我們利用結構方程模式分析結果發現，「獨特性識別」、「聲望識別」皆分別和「消費者-公司認同」有正向的關係。此外，「消費者-公司認同」也分別對「再購意願」、「口碑」有正向的影響。最後，提出本篇研究管理意涵以供企業經理人在行銷策略上的運用，提升公司績效。

關鍵詞：消費者-公司認同、獨特性識別、聲望識別、再購意願、口碑

ABSTRACT

For companies, the cost of acquiring a new customer is several times the cost of retaining an existing customer. Furthermore, the purchasing power of an existing customer is usually more predominant than a new one. Therefore, more and more companies attempt to establish long-term relationships with customers in order to make them patronize again or do other useful behaviors.

The concept of consumer-company identification (C-C identification) has been used to qualify the deep, meaningful, and long-term relationships between consumers and companies. This research analyzes the antecedents and consequences of C-C identification. We suggest that high identity distinctiveness and identity prestige may lead to high C-C identification. Also, high C-C identification should enhance consumers' repurchase intention and word-of-mouth (WOM).

Our survey with questionnaire conducted to investigate and collect data is sent to the consumers who have shopping experience recently in department stores of Taiwan. The valid sample with questionnaire returned is 294. We analyze the results by using structural equation modeling (SEM) and find that identity distinctiveness and identity prestige have a positive relationship with C-C identification separately. Moreover, C-C identification also has a positive effect to repurchase intention and WOM. Eventually, the managerial implications of this study may help corporate managers to ponder their marketing strategies or even improve their firms' performance.

Keywords: Consumer-company identification (C-C identification), Identity distinctiveness, Identity prestige, Repurchase intention, Word-of-mouth (WOM)

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Motivation

As Peppers and Rogers (1993) acutely pointed out, the cost of finding a new customer is usually six to nine times the cost of retaining an existing customer. Cliff (1998) observed very truly that the purchasing power of an existing customer is often more potent than a new one. Thence, more and more companies attempt to establish long-term relationships with customers in order to make them patronize again or even take other useful behaviors (e.g., recommend). Much ink has been spent on customer loyalty (Reichheld, 1996), customer satisfaction (Fournier and Mick, 1999), relationship marketing (De Wulf, Odekerken-Schroder, and Iacobucci, 2001), and customer relationship management (CRM) (Winer, 2001). As we know, conventional relationship marketing was powerful previously. However, the core contention, customer loyalty, customer satisfaction, may not enough for a firm's long-term marketing strategy anymore. The problem of low explained power or inconsistent results was mentioned in anterior researches.

On the other hand, social identity theory (SIT) was developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner (1979). They attempted to identify the situations that would lead members of a group (e.g., class, baseball team, or political party) in favor of the in-group and even against another out-group. Some related researches in marketing explored

antecedents and consequences of social identity. Also, SIT can be expanded to different types of identification such as organizational identification (OID). Because people can get the source of pride and self-esteem from the groups they belong to, they may also get same needs from the organizations they belong to or identify with. OID is another important field of research due to the long-term relationship between people and the organizations (Tompkins, 2005).

To date, this kind of identification research has investigated the relationships between members and non-profit organizations (e.g., Bhattacharya, Rao, and Glynn, 1995; Mael and Ashforth, 1992). Also, it has probed the relationships between employees and their employer (e.g., Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquail, 1994). On the basis of positive consequences of identification (e.g., Bergami and Bagozzi, 2000; Mael and Ashforth, 1992), customers can do some useful extra-role behaviors or in-role behaviors to the companies whom they identify with (Ahearne, Bhattacharya, and Gruen, 2005).

For practitioners, the issue how companies are able to build deep and long-term relationships with their customers is discussed in many previous researches. In the last few years, several articles have been devoted to the study of consumer-company identification (C-C identification). The service-profit chain (SPC) of social identity-based provides an extra approach to affect company profits (Homburg, Wieseke,

and Hoyer, 2009). Homburg et al.'s study made a considerable contribution to marketing theory and research. It demonstrated a positive role for social identification construct in developing strong customer relationship, which in turn lead to positive market and financial outcomes. In addition, its managerial implication indicates that firms shouldn't only rely on customer satisfaction, but also others such as the self-identity between customers and companies. The result of previous research (Lichtenstein, Netemeyer, and Maxham, 2010) suggests that retailers should improve the company's financial performance by enhancing C-C identification. Some researches proved that consumers would like to make long-term relationships with the companies they identify with. Also, companies have high C-C identification with their consumers may make consumers do some useful behaviors for the companies. Therefore, corporate managers should upgrade C-C identification to improve the outcome of their companies.

The most important addition to be made to what we have said about C-C identification is to inquire not only its consequences but also antecedents. Some previous researches explored both antecedents and consequences in recent years (Ahearne, Bhattacharya, and Gruen, 2005; Bhattacharya and Sankar, 2003; Currás-Pérez, Bigné-Alcañiz, and Alvarado-Herrera, 2009). There may be many antecedents and their influences to C-C identification could be positive or negative. Bhattacharya and Sen

(2003) told us that Consumer-Company relationships can't be unilaterally forced by companies. It depends on the self-definitional needs of consumers. They explored that identity distinctiveness, prestige and similarity will strengthen C-C identification of the companies which the consumers identify with: "The relationships between consumers' perceptions of a company identity and their evaluation of its attractiveness are mediated by the identity's perceived distinctiveness on dimensions they value, perceived prestige and perceived similarity to their own" (Ahearne, Bhattacharya, and Gruen, 2005). The scholars provided evidence that the effect of company identification on customer behavior is above and beyond the effect of product evaluation. Also, they found that the characteristics of organizations and the characteristics of salespersons could influence C-C identification. Customers would like to take an extra step to support the companies which they are attracted to the characteristics of the companies. Those anterior studies contribute to the marketing and business researches by demonstrating the existence of C-C identification and also providing insight into the subsequent benefits which companies are probable to gain. All in all, it is worthwhile examining the subject of the relationships (antecedents and consequences) of C-C identification between companies and consumers more closely.

According to former researches of C-C identification, the relationship between companies and consumers was acutely pointed out by scholars. This subject deserves

more than a passing notice. The contributions of this article include as follows. First, most of previous researches put identity attractiveness between C-C identification and self-definitional characteristics such as distinctiveness, prestige, similarity or coherence (Bhattacharya and Sankar, 2003; Currás-Pérez, Bigné-Alcañiz, and Alvarado-Herrera, 2009). The study wants to explore the direct influence of those characteristics to C-C identification. Also, the prior research (Bhattacharya and Sankar, 2003) didn't offer the support by quantifying its model testing. Currás-Pérez et al. (2009) have quantified the testing but they focused on the effects of CSR and brand identity characteristics (e.g., brand distinctiveness, brand prestige, and brand coherence). Therefore, the model testing is quantified and we focus on product identity characteristics (identity distinctiveness and identity prestige) in this article. Furthermore, many previous literatures explored the consequences of C-C identification. For example, scholars proved that C-C identification directly affects behavioral variables (e.g., purchase intention). However, word-of-mouth was mentioned without enough quantified testing in this kind of framework. We test not only repurchase intention but also word-of-mouth by quantifying them. Additionally, it merits discussing C-C identification in the other industries (e.g., department store). In most department stores, we can buy many different species of products. The testing results of research may be more impartial. In Taiwan, the density of department stores is high. Especially it takes the first place of the

world in Taipei, which is the capital city of Taiwan. Therefore, it is interesting to note how C-C identification and its relationships operate in this industry in Taiwan.

1.2 Research Questions and Relevant Design

This paper will investigate the questions as follows:

First, can the companies having high C-C identification result from their characteristics (e.g., high identity distinctiveness and prestige) attracting consumers?

Also, can the companies having high C-C identification affect favorable behaviors of their consumers (e.g., repurchase intention and word-of-mouth)?

The purposes of this study are enumerated below: First, the study will confirm and exam the relationships between consumer-company identification (C-C identification), identity distinctiveness and identity prestige (Dimitriadis and Papista, 2011). Second, according to previous researches (Kim, Han and Park, 2001; Ahearne, Bhattacharya, and Gruen, 2005; Curra's, Bigne' and Alvarado, 2009), C-C identification may be positive related to repurchase intention and word-of-mouth (WOM).

1.3 Structure of this Study

This study includes five chapters. The summary for each chapter is as follows:

Chapter one introduces background and motivation of the research in the first

segment. In the second segment, the purposes of the research are considered. The structure of the research is referred in final segment. Chapter two reviews the anterior literatures concerned with social identity, organizational identification, C-C identification, identity distinctiveness, identity prestige, repurchase intention, and word-of-mouth (WOM). Chapter three draws attention to the hypotheses of the research and its framework in the first segment. In the second segment, the measurement of constructs and indicators are showed. The collection of data, the approach and the statistics for analyzing the data are described in the last two segments. Chapter four comes to the results of the whole analysis including the characteristics of the sample, validity and reliability analysis, and structural equation modeling (SEM). Chapter five discusses the finding, implication, limitation of this study and some ideas for further research.



CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews several theories including social identity (SIT), organizational identity (OID), consumer-company identification (C-C identification), identity distinctiveness, identity prestige, repurchase intention, and word-of-mouth (WOM) as stated in chapter one above. Also, their definitions and applications will be discussed.

2.1 Social Identity Theory (SIT)

Social identity theory (SIT) is proposed in view of that people attach importance to the membership of particular groups they belong. Social identity gives birth to organizational identification and brings some organizational behaviors into play. SIT offers a social-psychological perspective, developed principally by Henri Tajfel (1978, 1981; Taifel and Tumer, 1985) and John Tumer (1975, 1982, 1984, 1985). According to this theory, people incline to classify themselves and others into various social categories, such as organizational membership, religious belief, or residence (Tajfel and Tumer, 1985).

2.2 Organizational Identification (OID)

Organizational identification (OID) is the degree of shared values, goals, and desires between a person and an organization. One of the pioneers, Phillip Tompkins,

introduced the concept of organizational identification in the study of organizational communication (Tompkins, 2005). Drawing on SIT and OID, many scholars proposed that people can get belongingness and other needs from the groups they belong to or the organizations they identify with. Moreover, several scholars demonstrated a positive role for the social identification construct in developing strong customer relationship, which in turn lead to positive market and financial outcomes (Homburg, Wieseke, and Hoyer, 2009). They suggested that companies should build useful relationships between them and people with some approaches (e.g., company identification) for improving firm performance.

2.3 Consumer-Company Identification (C-C Identification)

Former researches determined some reasons that consumers would like to have strong and meaningful relationships with certain companies they are attracted. Consumer-company identification (C-C identification) is one of approaches that companies can intensify their attractiveness (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003). The relationships between consumers and companies are not only unilaterally forced by companies, but also depend on the self-definitional needs of consumers. Moreover, the research tested some contentions regarding the crucial antecedents and consequences of C-C identification in the market. Another previous research contributed to the marketing

researches by indicating the existence of identification in the customer region and offering foresight into the cultivated identification and the consecutive benefits (Ahearne, Bhattacharya, and Gruen, 2005). Also, some evidences were provided that customers are willing to take an extra step to support a company if they are attracted to the characteristics of this company or its employee. Furthermore, scholars pointed that some product utilization behaviors or even extra-role behaviors (e.g., word-of-mouth) of customers are affected positively by C-C identification. Many researches focused on C-C identification and its contributions.

2.4 Identity Distinctiveness

The demand which people distinguish themselves from others in social environment was argued by SIT (Tajfel and Turner, 1985). Prior theory of distinctiveness proposes that not only do people have their demand to be similar to others, but they also have their demand to be unique by identify with groups (Brewer, 1991). Also, customers would be attracted by the companies with an aspect of inimitable characteristics (e.g., culture, strategy, structure). Some previous researches suggest that the relationship between identity attractiveness and C-C identification may be mediated by identity distinctiveness (Ahearne, Bhattacharya, & Gruen, 2005; Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). Consequently, distinctiveness is a considered organizational

characteristic and a decisive factor of attractiveness.

2.5 Identity Prestige

People's demands of positive self-continuity, self-enhancement, and self-views could elevate their self-esteem (Kunda, 1999). Previous researches of organizational identification prove that people would identify with prestigious organizations or companies to meet their demands of self-enhancement (Ashforth and Mael, 1989; Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquail, 1994) and their sense of self-worth (Bergami and Bagozzi, 2000). Furthermore, identity attractiveness of companies may be partly decided by identity prestige (Cheney, 1983; Pratt, 1998). C-C identification could be affected by the external image of companies and the view of related outsiders (Bergami and Bagozzi, 2000; Smidts, Pruyn, and Van Riel, 2001). Former researches also propose that the relationship between identity attractiveness and C-C identification may be mediated by identity prestige (Ahearne et al., 2005; Bhattacharya & Sankar, 2003).

2.6 Repurchase Intention

The major behavior customers can exercise in their role is product purchase. Some academics (Currás-Pérez, 2009; Lichtenstein et al., 2004; Madrigal, 2001) propound the models where C-C identification influences consumer affective responses like purchase

intention. The Theory of Extended Self (Belk, 1988) advances that the behavior of product purchase voice and project self, required for personal definition. All in all, most researches didn't focus on repurchase intention. Is there any difference between purchase intention and repurchase intention? In addition, Mittal and Kamakura (2001) filled the void that relate satisfaction ratings to actual repurchase behavior.

2.7 Word-of-Mouth (WOM)

WOM is which information about companies, brands, products, services, and so on could be transferred from one consumer to another. Harrison-Walker (2001) defined WOM as "informal, person-to-person communication between a perceived noncommercial communicator and a receiver regarding a brand, a product, an organization, or a service" (p. 63). Many articles describe encouraging positive WOM as the valuable and grassroots way of marketing (Deal and Abel, 2001).

For consumers, WOM is one of positive promotion when they identify with the company and its products. (e.g., the U.K. retail bank, is recommend by its customers and gain more than one-third of its new business deals; Smith 2001). More and more companies attempt to drive the power of WOM advertising.

2.8 Overview

In short, we bring up that C-C identification is derived from OID and SIT. Turning to this paper, we define C-C identification as recognition and acceptance to the company which consumers identify with including a self-definitional and an emotional meaning. Additionally, certain related literatures of identity distinctiveness and prestige show that there are some positive relations among C-C identification, identity attractiveness, and those characteristics. Finally, the prior literatures of repurchase intention and WOM are referred. In the next chapter, the research design and methodology of our study will be demonstrated.

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter focuses on the hypotheses of the research and framework on the basis of previous literatures in the first segment. The second segment shows the source of scale items for measuring selected constructs, including C-C Identification, identity distinctiveness, identity prestige, repurchase intention, and word-of-mouth (WOM). The other segments describe the collection of data, the approach and the statistics for analyzing the data.

3.1 Hypotheses

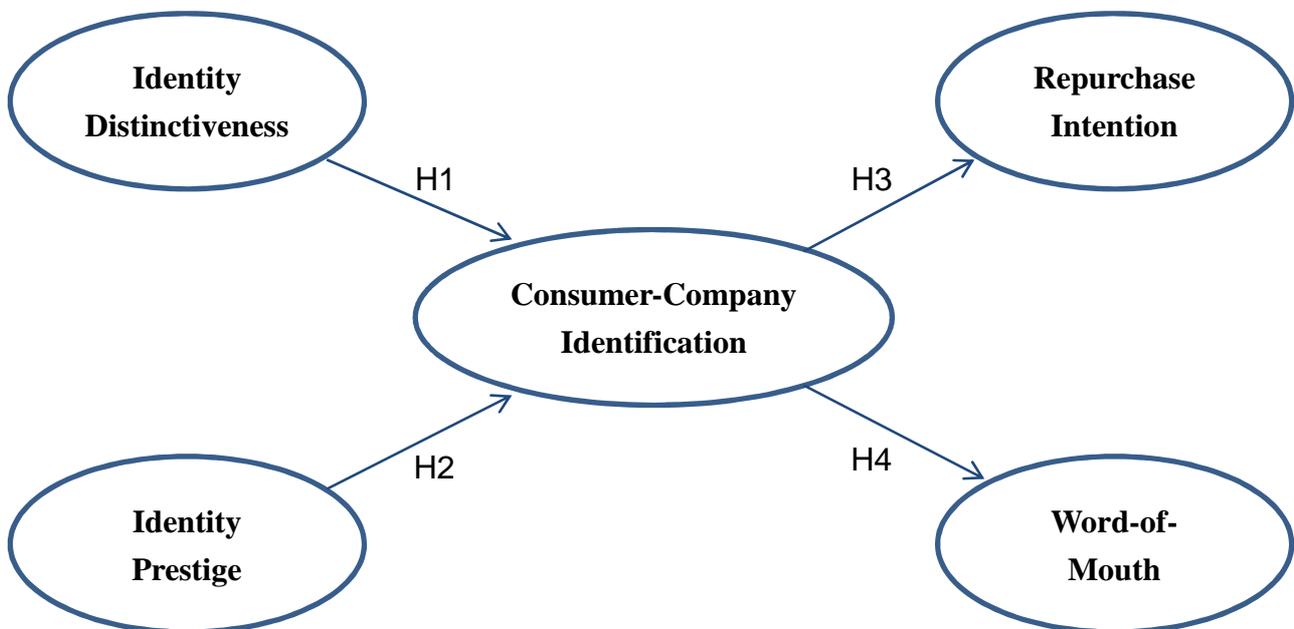
This study is designed to explore the identification relationships between consumers and companies based on former researches. We reaffirm and examine the antecedents and consequences of C-C identification involving identity distinctiveness, identity prestige, repurchase intention, and WOM. In the following, the hypotheses of our study will be developed in view of opportune literatures.

3.1.1 Theoretical Framework

Figure 3-1 represents the relations of our hypothesized model among C-C identification, identity distinctiveness, identity prestige, repurchase intention, and WOM.

The ground for considering these constructs is that they are widely exploited in marketing and business researches (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003; Babin 2005; Cornwell and Coote 2005; Curra's, Bigne', and Alvarado 2009; Homburg, Wieseke, and Hoyer 2009). This conceptual model is presented as shown below:

Figure 3-1 Conceptual Framework



Previous research believes that there is a strong, direct relation between identity attractiveness and organizational identification: "The greater the attractiveness of the perceived identity of an organization, the stronger is a person's identification with it" (Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquail 1994, p.244). According to prior researches, the same observation can apply to business. Though identity attractiveness, some characteristics (e.g., identity distinctiveness, prestige, similarity, or coherence) have positive relationships with C-C identification (Bhattacharya et al., 2003; Currás-Pérez et al., 2009). Moreover, C-C identification can influence consumers' behaviors (e.g., purchase intention). This study will remove the construct of identity attractiveness and probe that the connections among identity distinctiveness, prestige and C-C identification.

3.1.2 Identity Distinctiveness → C-C Identification

Prior studies implicate that consumer-company relationships can't be only unilaterally imposed by companies. It also depends on consumers' self-definitional needs. Social identity research debates that most of people would distinguish themselves from others (Tajfel and Turner, 1985). Moreover, people identify with their groups which meet not only the need to be similar to others but also the need to be unique (Brewer, 1991). According to previous researches, higher identity (brand) distinctiveness may lead to higher identity (brand) attractiveness (Bhattacharya & Sen,

2003; Currás-Pérez, Bigné-Alcañiz, & Alvarado-Herrera, 2009). Thence, distinctiveness is a noteworthy organizational characteristic to identity attractiveness and even C-C identification. In the paper, we define this identity distinctiveness as some inimitable characteristics of the company and it can attract and make consumers identify with it. Thus, our hypothesis is as follows:

H1: Identity distinctiveness has a positive influence on C-C identification.

3.1.3 Identity Prestige → C-C Identification

Greater self-esteem could originate from the affirmation and retention of positive self-views and self-enhancement (Kunda, 1999). Furthermore, consumers identify with organizations which have prestigious identities for contenting their need of self-enhancement (Ashforth and Mael, 1989; Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquail, 1994). Therefore, C-C identification and identity attractiveness can be evaluated by its perceived prestige (Cheney, 1983; Pratt, 1998). According to previous researches, higher identity (brand) prestige may result in higher identity (brand) attractiveness (Bhattacharya & Sankar, 2003; Currás-Pérez et al., 2009). In this paper, identity prestige is defined as reputation of the company and it is able to attract and make consumers identify with it. Thus, our hypothesis is:

H2: Identity prestige has a positive influence on C-C identification.

3.1.4 C-C Identification → Repurchase Intention

Some academics (Lichtenstein et al., 2004; Madrigal, 2001) propound the models where C-C identification influences consumer behaviors like purchase intention. The Theory of Extended Self (Belk, 1988) advances that the behavior of product purchase voice and project self, required for personal definition. Also, consumers identify with the company by purchasing its products (Yoon et al., 2006). Nowadays, repurchase intention is defined as the intent which the consumers would like to patronize the company again after buying its product. Thus, the hypothesis is:

H3: C-C identification has a positive influence on repurchase intention.

3.1.5 C-C Identification → Word-of-Mouth (WOM)

WOM is which information about companies, brands, products, services, and so on could be transferred from one consumer to another. Harrison-Walker (2001) defined WOM as "informal, person-to-person communication between a perceived noncommercial communicator and a receiver regarding a brand, a product, an organization, or a service" (p. 63). Many articles describe encouraging positive WOM as the valuable and grassroots way of marketing (Deal and Abel, 2001). More and more

companies attempt to drive the power of WOM advertising. However, not many studies explored its antecedents. Here, we define WOM as the behavior which the consumers would like to recommend the company for their relatives or friends after experiencing an enjoyable or a beneficial service. Thus, the hypothesis is:

H4: C-C identification has a positive influence on word-of-mouth.

3.2 Construct and Measurement

In this study, there are five major constructs below: (1) C-C identification; (2) identity distinctiveness; (3) identity prestige; (4) repurchase intention; and (5) WOM. We use the 5 scale items developed by Mael et al.'s studies to measure C-C identification (Mael and Ashforth, 1992; Homburg, Wieseke, and Hoyer, 2009). The 3 scale items developed by Bhattacharya et al.'s studies are used to measure identity distinctiveness (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003; Curra's, Bigne', and Alvarado, 2009). Another 3 scale items developed by Mael et al.'s studies are used to measure identity prestige (Mael and Ashforth, 1992; Bhattacharya, Rao, and Glynn, 1995; Cornwell and Coote, 2005; Curra's, Bigne' and Alvarado, 2009). We also use 3 scale items developed by Putrevu et al.'s studies to measure repurchase intention (Putrevu and Lord's, 1994; Curra's, Bigne', and Alvarado, 2009). Finally, WOM is measured by 3 scale items developed by Zeithaml et al.'s studies (Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman,

1996; Babin, 2005; Cheng, Yang, and Chen, 2011). These items are all rated on the seven-point Likert Scale, ranging from “1 = strongly disagree” to “7 = strongly agree”.

Table 3-1 Summary of Overall Model Constructs

Constructs	Definition	Measure Items	Source
Consumer-Company Identification (C-C Identification)	Recognition and acceptance to the company which consumers identify with includes a self-definitional and an emotional meaning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I strongly identify with [X] 2. I feel good to be a customer of [X] 3. I like to tell that I am a customer of [X] 4. [X] fits well to me 5. I feel attached to [X] 	Mael & Ashforth (1992); Homburg, Wieseke, & Hoyer (2009)
Identity Distinctiveness	The inimitable characteristic of the company can attract and make consumers identify with it	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. [X] is different from the other brands in the sector 2. [X] is different from the rest of its competitors 3. [X] stands out from its competitors 	Bhattacharya & Sen (2003); Curra's, Bigne', & Alvarado (2009)
Identity Prestige	Reputation of the company is able to attract and make consumers identify with it	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The people around me have a positive image of [X] 2. In general [X] is a respected brand 3. [X] is a brand with a good reputation 	Mael & Ashforth (1992); Bhattacharya, Rao, & Glynn (1995); Cornwell & Coote (2005); Curra's, Bigne' & Alvarado (2009)

Table 3-1 (Continue)

Constructs	Definition	Measure Items	Source
Repurchase Intention	The intent which the consumers would like to patronize the company again after buying its product	1. The next time I need to buy any toiletry and cosmetic product, I will choose [X] 2. It is very likely that in the future I will buy a product of [X] 3. I will definitely buy a product of [X]	Putrevu and Lord's (1994); Curra's, Bigne', and Alvarado (2009)
Word-of-Mouth (WOM)	The behavior which the consumers would like to recommend the company for others after experiencing an enjoyable or a beneficial service	1. I will say positive things about [X] to other people 2. I will recommend it to someone who seeks my advice 3. I will encourage friends and relatives to visit [X]	Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman (1996); Babin (2005); Cheng, Yang, and Chen (2011)

3.3 Process of Data Collection

This segment reports the process to design the survey and the operandi to ensure the perspicuity of our questionnaire. In addition, the selection of sample is also reasoned.

3.3.1 Questionnaire Survey Design

For examining the proposed relations among consumer-company identification (C-C identification), its antecedents, and its consequences, the questionnaire involves five constructs with seventeen items. Each item uses seven-point Likert Scale ranging from “1 = strongly disagree” to “7 = strongly agree” to finger out this quantitative study with our respondents. Also, all questions adapted from pertinent former researches are translated from English to Chinese. In this study, we take department stores on behalf of “company”. To guarantee our questions perspicuity, 6 specialists (i.e., one professor, two doctoral students, and three persons who have shopping experience in the department stores) are asked to check the statement of each questionnaire item.

3.3.2 Sample

The sample of this survey is collected from the consumers having shopping

experience of department store in Taipei City or Kaohsiung City. Although the choosing of these samples is primarily convenience based, some reasons are considered as follow: First, the department store density is very high in both cities. It is worth to investigate whether C-C identification and its relationships can work well in this industry. Second, one of these cities is in the north and another one is in the south of Taiwan. These two are the first and second biggest cities here. According to location and population, we can understand the characteristics of consumers in this industry and place by examining the effects of pivotal constructs in our sample.

3.4 Measures and Analytical Approach

For the purpose of this study, we ask consumers the questions of their C-C identification to department stores by using our questionnaire. Then, we analyze those data and interpreted the meanings of figures by using statistic software including SPSS and LISREL in the study.

CHAPTER 4 ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

This chapter presents the empirical results of the study. It includes descriptive analysis, validity and reliability tests of measurement scales, and research findings.

4.1 Descriptive Analysis

In this segment, the preliminary analyses are conducted by providing the information of respondents' characteristics and relevant results of measurement.

4.1.1 Data Collection

The period of our survey with structured questionnaires is from April 30th, 2012 to May 13th, 2012. The reference source of each measure item has showed in table 3-1. The questionnaires contain two versions. One is paper version and another is electronic version. The total respondents who have shopping experience of department stores in Taipei City or Kaohsiung City amounted to 350. We sent the electronic one to some consumers by using E-mail and took paper one to ask other consumers by face-to-face. And then, 310 questionnaires were collected. Among these returned questionnaires, 294 had completed responses across all variables of the study. It means that the usable response rate is 84.0%.

4.1.2 Characteristics of the Respondents

Table 4-1 reports the statistics which are the characteristics of our sample. Five demographical items are included in this study: (1) gender, (2) age, (3) occupation, (4) education, and (5) residence. We may note, in passing, that column of residence is not equal to shopping area. It means some of the respondents having shopping experience in Taipei City or Kaohsiung City, but they are from other cities.

Among these respondents, 58.8% are female and 41.2% are male. The superior quantity of the respondents' ages range from 21 to 30 years old (47.3%) or from 31 to 40 years old (27.2%). Regarding the highest education level of the respondents, the major part of them holds college degree (56.8%) or master degree (34.0%). As for the respondents' residence, most of them are from the south (58.5%) or the North (32.0%) of Taiwan.

Table 4-1 Characteristics of the Sample

Characteristic	Participants	
	(n = 294)	
	n	%
Gender:		
Male	121	41.2
Female	173	58.8
Age:		
Not more than 20	50	17.0
21 ~ 30	139	47.3
31 ~ 40	80	27.2
41 ~ 50	19	6.5
Not less than 50	6	2.0
Occupation:		
Agriculture	1	.3
Manufacturing industry	26	8.8
Business	40	13.6
Military / Public servant	19	6.5
Service industry	38	12.9
Freelancer	14	4.8
Student	137	46.6
Others	19	6.5

Table 4-1 (Continue)

Characteristic	n	%
Education:		
Senior high	19	6.5
College	167	56.8
Master	100	34.0
Doctor	8	2.7
Others	0	0
Residence:		
North	94	32.0
Middle	22	7.5
South	172	58.5
East	3	1.0
Oversea	3	1.0

Note: Total number of participants = 294.

4.2 Validity and Reliability

We use confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to evaluate the quality of our measurement. The results of analyses are offered in table 4-2 and table 4-3. The figures of table 4-2 include factor loading, t-value, coefficient alpha, composite reliability, average variance extracted, chi-square test, degrees of freedom, non-normed fit index, comparative fit index, root mean square error of approximation, and standardized root mean square residual. The figures of table 4-3 include mean, standard deviation, and correlation matrix.

According to table 4-2, the indices suggest that the model works with our data (chi-square test [χ^2] = 610.09, degrees of freedom [d.f.] = 109; non-normed fit index [NNFI] = .95; comparative fit index [CFI] = .96; root mean square error of approximation [RMSEA] = .125; and standardized root mean square residual [SRMR] = .060) (Bagozzi et al., 1988; Bentler et al., 1980; Jarvenpaa et al., 2000). Furthermore, all coefficient alphas [α] (from .85 to .91) comply with a standard ($> .7$). All composite reliabilities [CR] (from .87 to .94) also comply with a standard ($> .7$). Thus, we can find that the reliability of our measurement model is supported (Nunnally, 1978). Then, all factor loadings (from .70 to .97) meet a standard ($> .7$), t-values are significant ($p < .01$), and all average variances extracted [AVE] (from .66 to .84) are fine ($> .5$). Therefore, our convergent validity is supported (Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

Table 4-2 Confirmatory factor analysis, reliability, and validity

Construct	Factor Loading	t-value	α	CR	AVE
CCI (Consumer-Company Identification)			.87	.91	.66
1. I strongly identify with [X]	.83	17.24			
2. I feel good to be a customer of [X]	.87	18.52			
3. I like to tell that I am a customer of [X]	.87	18.59			
4. [X] fits well to me	.77	15.37			
5. I feel attached to [X]	.70	13.40			
RI (Repurchase Intention)			.87	.90	.76
1. The next time I need to buy any toiletry and cosmetic product, I will choose [X]	.86	18.03			
2. It is very likely that in the future I will buy a product of [X]	.90	19.54			
3. I will definitely buy a product of [X]	.85	17.75			
WOM (Word-of-Mouth)			.91	.94	.84
1. I will say positive things about [X] to other people	.90	19.90			
2. I will recommend it to someone who seeks my advice	.97	22.39			
3. I will encourage friends and relatives to visit [X]	.88	18.88			

Table 4-2 (Continue)

Construct	Factor Loading	t-value	α	CR	AVE
ID (Identity Distinctiveness)			.85	.87	.69
1. [X] is different from the other brands in the sector	.82	16.32			
2. [X] is different from the rest of its competitors	.82	16.38			
3. [X] stands out from its competitors	.86	17.64			
IP (Identity Prestige)			.85	.88	.72
1. The people around me have a positive image of [X]	.81	16.53			
2. In general [X] is a respected brand	.89	19.11			
3. [X] is a brand with a good reputation	.84	17.23			

$\chi^2 = 610.09$; d.f. = 109; NNFI = 0.95; CFI = 0.96; RMSEA= 0.125 SRMR = 0.060

Note: 1. C.R. (composite reliability) = $(\sum \text{Loading})^2 / ((\sum \text{Loading})^2 + (\text{Var}))$

2. AVE (average variance extracted) = $(\sum \text{Loading}^2) / ((\sum \text{Loading}^2) + (\text{Var}))$

3. All factor loadings are significant at the 0.01 level or better.

In table 4-3, it presents that the figures of relationships among the constructs (from .61 to .81). The information of AVE is shown in table 4-2 (from .66 to .84.). After comparing the square of parameters between every two constructs with the AVE, we find that those figures of table 4-3 are less than the AVE (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Therefore, all possible pairs of constructs meet this criterion and discriminant validity is supported.

Table 4-3 Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations

Construct	CCI	RI	WOM	ID	IP
CCI	1.00				
RI	.76	1.00			
WOM	.75	.81	1.00		
ID	.61	.73	.65	1.00	
IP	.73	.74	.72	.76	1.00
Mean	5.14	5.17	4.98	4.55	5.13
Standard deviation	.93	1.09	1.09	1.05	.91

Notes: 1. CCI (consumer-company identification), RI (repurchase intention), WOM (word-of-mouth), ID (identity distinctiveness), and IP (identity prestige)

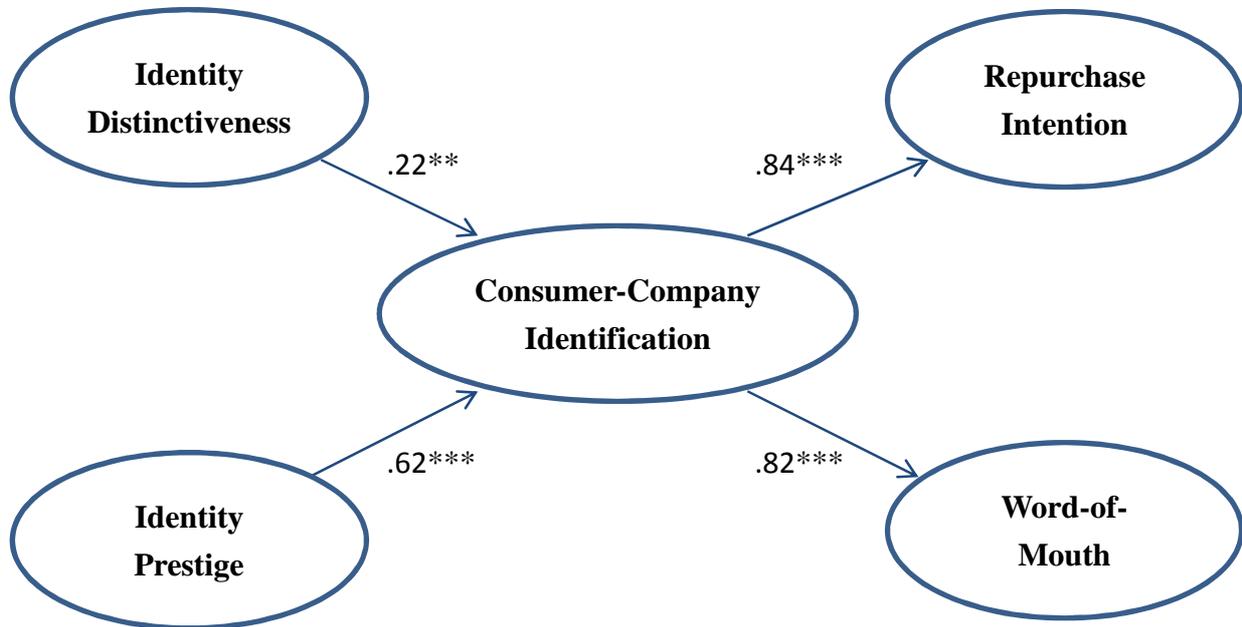
2. All correlations are significant at the 0.01 level or better.

4.3 Results of Testing Hypotheses

We use structural equation modeling (SEM) method to test our hypotheses. The resulting standardized parameter estimates and fit indices are showed in Figure 4-1. Also, all hypotheses descriptions and our findings are presented in Table 4-4.

Figure 4-1 indicates that the model fits data well ($\chi^2 = 732.31$, d.f. = 114, CFI = .95, NNFI = .94, RMSEA = .136). As figure 4-1 illustrates, all direct effects are significant ($p < .01$) in the expected direction. As our forecast, ID (identity distinctiveness) and CCI (C-C identification) may have a positive relationship. The results of our analysis (see Figure 4-1) prove that the path of ID and CCI is positive ($\gamma_{1,1} = .22$, $p < .01$). Also, there should be a positive relationship between IP (identity prestige) and CCI (C-C identification) as we predict. The examining of statistics suggests that the relation between IP and CCI is allowed ($\gamma_{1,2} = .62$, $p < .001$). In addition, we think that a positive relationship is between CCI and RI (repurchase intention). With the evidence shown, the positive relationship between both CCI and RI is undoubted ($\beta_{2,1} = .84$, $p < .001$). Moreover, we also confirm that CCI and WOM (word-of-mouth) have a positive relationship ($\beta_{3,1} = .82$, $p < .001$). Therefore, all hypotheses are supported by the results.

Figure 4-1 Results of Model



Fit Indices: $\chi^2 = 732.31$, d.f. = 114, CFI = .95, NNFI = .94, RMSEA = .136

Note: ** p-value <.01, ***p-value < .001

Table 4-4 Comparison path estimates

Hypothesis	Path	Standardized Estimates	Finding
H1	ID→CCI ($\gamma_{1,1}$)	.22**	Supported
H2	IP→CCI ($\gamma_{1,2}$)	.62***	Supported
H3	CCI→RI ($\beta_{2,1}$)	.84***	Supported
H4	CCI→WOM ($\beta_{3,1}$)	.82***	Supported

$\chi^2 = 732.31$, d.f. = 114, CFI = .95, NNFI = .94, RMSEA = .136

Note: 1. CCI (consumer-company identification), RI (repurchase intention), WOM (word-of-mouth), ID (identity distinctiveness), and IP (identity prestige)

2. ** p-value <.01, ***p-value < .001

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter discusses the findings of our analysis, the contributions and limitations of this study, and recommendations for further research. The objective of the study is to explore and to examine the identification relationships between companies and consumers. We investigate the antecedents (identity distinctiveness and identity prestige) and consequences (repurchase intention and WOM) of C-C identification. In the following segment, the discussions and conclusions of the study are presented.

5.1 Discussions

To face the challenges of the competitors, companies have to economize on their cost and strive for customers' support. Establishing long-term relationships with customers is one of their marketing strategies to achieve the goals. Therefore, the study investigates the antecedents and consequences of C-C identification and the major findings are as follows:

First, the results of the study suggest that not only the relationship between identity distinctiveness and C-C identification is positive, but also the relationship between identity prestige and C-C identification is positive. That is to say, the strength of identity distinctiveness and prestige affect C-C identification. If companies have higher identity distinctiveness or prestige with consumers, the C-C identification could be higher.

Second, the results prove that there is a positive relationship between C-C identification and repurchase intention. Namely, the strength of C-C identification affects the repurchase intention of consumers. If companies make consumers have high C-C identification, the consumers would like to patronize and buy their products again.

Finally, the results show that the relationship between C-C identification and WOM is positive. In other words, the strength of C-C identification also affects the WOM of consumers. If companies make consumers have high C-C identification, the consumers would like to tell their relatives or friends some good words about the companies.

5.2 Contributions of the Study

For a start, we collate some related theories (e.g., social identity theory (SIT), organizational identification (OID), and consumer-company identification (C-C identification)) and previous literatures. Then, the identification relationships between consumers and companies are explored by collecting the data from consumers and analyzing it. Moreover, we make use of structural equation modeling (SEM) to examine our sample regarding C-C identification other constructs. All in all, the study makes several contributions including theoretical contributions and managerial implications in the following.

5.2.1 Theoretical Contributions

The issues what kinds of antecedents and consequences of C-C identification are discussed in some previous researches. This study builds the framework with related constructs based on Bhattacharya et al.'s researches (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003; Currás-Pérez, Bigné-Alcañiz, and Alvarado-Herrera, 2009). In addition, our survey with questionnaire conducted to investigate and collect data is sent to the consumers having shopping experience in department stores. Moreover, we confirm and examine all the effects (identity distinctiveness → C-C identification, identity prestige → C-C identification, C-C identification → repurchase intention, and C-C identification → WOM) of the study on consumers are positive by using SEM.

In other words, the theoretical contributions of our article include as follows. First, the study explores direct influence of the self-definitional characteristics (identity distinctiveness and identity prestige) to C-C identification. Also, we offer the support by quantifying the model testing which includes antecedents and consequences of C-C identification. Especially, we put purchase intention and WOM as the behavioral variables.

5.2.2 Managerial Implications

Previous researches mentioned that maintaining a long-term, deep, meaningful relationship with consumers could help companies make their financial performance better. To face the competitors, many companies try to establish a relationship with consumers. However, some of them may use the wrong way to achieve the goal. Through this study, it provides evidence that consumers are willing to take an extra step to support the company if they are attracted to some company's characteristics such as distinctiveness or prestige. Corporate managers should improve their C-C identification by strengthening those characteristics as described above.

5.3 Limitations

There are several limitations of this paper in the following:

First, moderators are not concerned here. We focus on the relations among those constructs without bringing any moderators into the study. Also, only repurchase intention and WOM are taken as the consequences of C-C identification. Others such as company's financial performance are not considered due to the difficulty of information collection. Additionally, the sample was only collected from the customers having shopping experience in department stores of Taiwan. However, different cultures of countries may be moderators and lead to different results. Finally, we collected the sample from consumers after they had shopping experience of interacting with the sales

frequently. This sort of consumers should be more likely VIP for the company.

5.4 Suggestion for Future Research

This study explores the antecedents (identity distinctiveness and identity prestige) and consequences (repurchase intention and WOM) of C-C identification. The further research can investigate other antecedents or consequences. Doing different study on other industries and testing the more general model of identification should be suggested. Also, the new study could be generalizable to not only B-to-C but also other B-to-B situations. In addition, sales who are the first-line employees face customers. Their characteristics, behaviors or employee-company identification (ECI) may be the effective moderators in the study.

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APPENDIX – SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

敬愛的受訪者 您好:

感謝您撥空填答此份問卷，本問卷主要的目的在了解您於百貨公司專櫃購買服飾時的相關感受。每項問題皆無標準答案，您僅需依照個人想法作答即可。本問卷採不計名方式作答，所有資料僅供學術研究之用，絕不對外公開，敬請安心作答。

敬祝

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指導教授： 黃明新 博士

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一、請試著回想您近期於百貨公司購買服飾總金額超過新台幣一千五百元整，並且與百貨公司專櫃銷售人員有密集互動的購物經驗(專櫃人員介紹服飾或是回答您所提出關於服飾的任何問題)，並且依據上述回想之購物經驗完成下列句子。

例如：我一個月前在 Calvin Klein 花了 1500 元買了一件衣服。

我_____在_____花了_____元買了_____。

請翻頁作答

接下來請試著回想並依照您所填答的購物經驗回答以下問題

請圈選您認為較貼近且能完整呈現您感受之數字

二、請閱讀以下各題描述後，選擇最符合之答案。

	非 常 不 同 意	不 同 意	稍 微 不 同 意	沒 有 意 見	稍 微 同 意	同 意	非 常 同 意
1 我非常認同這家專櫃。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2 成為這家專櫃的顧客是很好的事。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3 我樂於告訴別人我是這家專櫃的顧客。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4 這家專櫃很適合我。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5 我對這家專櫃有歸屬感。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6 如果未來我需要同類型的產品時，我會考慮再到這間專櫃購買。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7 未來我很有可能會回這家專櫃購買服飾。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8 我一定會再到這家專櫃購買服飾。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9 我會對其他人說這家專櫃的好話。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10 當有人徵詢我的意見時，我會推薦這家專櫃。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11 我會鼓勵我的親人及朋友光顧這家專櫃。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12 此專櫃與其它同類型的專櫃不同。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13 此專櫃與其競爭對手不同。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14 此專櫃在眾多競爭對手中表現傑出。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15 我周遭的人對此專櫃的印象是正面的。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16 一般而言，此專櫃是令人敬重的。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17 此專櫃擁有良好的信譽。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

請翻頁作答

個人基本資料

- 1.性別: 男 女
- 2.年齡: 20歲以下 21~30歲 31~40歲 41~50歲 51歲以上
- 3.職業: 農林漁牧 工 商(含金融) 軍公教 服務業 自由業
學生 其他 _____(請說明)
4. 學歷: 國中(含以下) 高中職 大專院校 碩士 博士(含以上)
5. 居住地區: 北部地區(基隆、台北、桃園、新竹、苗栗)
中部地區(台中、彰化、雲林、南投)
南部地區(嘉義、台南、高雄、屏東)
東部地區(宜蘭、花蓮、台東)
離島(澎湖、金門、馬祖、綠島等)
國外(非台澎金馬地區)
6. Email: _____

** 問卷到此結束，感謝您的耐心填答！ **

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

My name is Vincent. I have a lot of hobbies. I like reading, photography, sport, music and movie. During my school years, I was a president of photography club, a captain of picket, a vice president of the class, a study class leader and a P.E. class leader. I learned some things including responsibility, planning activities and improving relationships with others. Also, I have worked for my school, Nielsen Company Taiwan, and a coffee shop. Those experiences helped me understand how to face people and talk easily.

My project team and I won the first place in the project design and implementation achievement contest when I was a senior in the university. We constructed the Mobile English Learning System. The competition for the first prize was fierce. Nonetheless, we have finally succeeded after numerous attempts to implement the system. Moreover, I understood some important principles: "Teamwork is very important." "If at first you don't succeed... try, try again."

After serving in the army, I have worked in Sinyi, Eslite, Cavesbooks and Shin Kong Mitsukoshi for several years. When I worked in Sinyi, I helped people to buy or to sell their houses. When I worked in Eslite and Shin Kong Mitsukoshi, I promoted foreign investment, negotiated with factory owners, administered sales and executed marketing plans. When I worked in Cavesbooks, I sold teachers matters for teaching

and held book fairs. Those working experiences are valuable for me. I learned how to better manage my time, responsibilities, and learned how to accomplish multiple tasks.

Furthermore, I studied in abroad in the University of Western Australia to broaden my international horizon. I got to know many people from different countries and explored different cultures. I hope to utilize these people skills in my future experiences.

Additionally, I studied MBA in NSYSU. I learned the knowledge such as marketing, production, human resource, and financial management there. I appreciate your time and review for my thesis. Thank you!