

A longitudinal investigation of the impact of disconfirmation on customer loyalty in subscription based-services

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Abstract

Long-term retention poses a significant challenge to subscription-based services, prompting us to investigate how loyalty evolves over time. This paper draws on expectation-disconfirmation theory to explore the effects of disconfirmation, initial expectation level, and service usage variability on intra-category loyalty. Using a panel dataset comprising 1,795 households and 9,124 observations across 7 periods, the findings reveal that positive disconfirmation reduces the likelihood of changes in the subscription set. This effect is stronger during the initial stages of the customer's relationship with the service, however, as the relationship matures, higher levels of positive disconfirmation are needed to sustain intra-category loyalty. Additionally, lower initial expectations attenuate, while higher expectations amplify the effect of disconfirmation on loyalty. The effect also varies significantly with service usage variability: low variability strengthens the relationship whereas high variability fosters subscription changes.

Track: Relationship Marketing