Drama Experience in Upgrading Marketing Learners' Competence in Improving Customer Satisfaction

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Abstract

Currently, a major issue faced by Marketing learners in China is how to enhance their competence in improving customer satisfaction. Solving this problem will help them effectively meet market demands once they enter the workforce after graduation. This study investigated the impact of drama experience on the competence in improving customer satisfaction of Chinese Marketing learners and the mediating role of self-efficacy. Recently, research on drama education has increasingly explored its impact on college student's social skills, with drama even becoming a powerful tool for interdisciplinary teaching. However, there is limited research on the effect of drama on Marketing learners. Therefore, this study aims to explore the impact of drama from the perspective of the Marketing discipline. A quantitative research method was employed over four months. The researcher distributed three surveys to Marketing learners at one Chinese university to collect their perspectives on their drama experience, self-efficacy, and improving customer satisfaction competence. The results of the data analysis indicated that drama experience significantly affects the competence in improving customer satisfaction of Marketing learners, with self-efficacy also playing a mediating role. This study shows that both in-class and out-of-class drama experience positively influence Marketing learners' ability to manage customer relationships, further highlighting the importance of drama in university education.

Keywords: *Drama Experience, Drama in Education, Marketing, Customer Satisfaction, Self-Efficacy*

INTRODUCTION

The term educational drama appears in China's Compulsory Education Arts Courses Standards (2022). Clearly, it states that through planning and implementing curricular learning activities or thematic campus activities, students will develop the comprehensive ability to use drama as a means of interdisciplinary learning. With due attention and support from the Chinese government, drama has grown tremendously in the past few years (Zeng, 2019). Developing and training these skills have become one of the reasons for interdisciplinary education in drama with other disciplines (Chi & Dong, 2023).

Aladini and Owda (2020) found that students' self-efficacy can improve by studying drama. Self-efficacy refers to a person's perception and judgment of their behaviour in a specific environment, and it plays a crucial role in whether a person can achieve their goals and deal with difficulties (Aladini & Owda, 2020).

Marketing is an intermediate link that connects social needs with enterprise development and is a crucial way to enhance product and service value (Xu, 2023). In China, universities have become the primary way to cultivate marketing talents and shoulder the mission of delivering professional talents to enterprises. As a result, it is common for Chinese universities to establish Customer Relationships Management Course to develop Marketing learners' competence in managing customer relationships. For marketers, improving customer satisfaction is an important part of achieving customer relationship management.

However, many learners have difficulty applying what they have learned in the sales process, and they believe they have problems with communication and need professional training (Jin, 2022). Although many learners have realized the importance of communication skills in marketing, they still suffer from shyness, lack of confidence, and fear of expressing themselves when speaking and interacting with others (Lv, 2021). This directly affects customer satisfaction with Marketing learners. Some enterprises reflect that although many

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marketers are Marketing graduates, they do not have good communication skills when dealing with customers, and they are not willing or good at communicating with others (Zheng, 2021). In order to enrich practical teaching, some universities apply role-playing and situational simulation in drama activities in the classroom of Marketing.

Yucesan and Sendurur (2018) showed that participating in creative drama activities can increase learners' sense of accomplishment, and this sense of achievement gives learners more confidence to improve their skills. According to Alfonso-Benlliure et al. (2021), drama not only has a beneficial effect on learners' emotional intelligence but also promotes their interpersonal skills. Improving interpersonal communication skills helps learners enhance their abilities in group learning and collaborative work within a team (Huang et al., 2024). In addition, the collaborative environment created by drama fosters students' social awareness, enabling them to empathize with others and consider their perspectives (Nurhasanah, 2022).

Although empirical evidence supports the use of drama in a variety of subject areas and age groups (Chi & Dong, 2023; Ou-Yang, 2020), little is known about whether Marketing Subject learners find drama experience beneficial; the extent to which drama contributes to learners' improving customer satisfaction. In addition to this, little research has been conducted on the impact of self-efficacy on Chinese Marketing learners. Therefore, this study will attempt to fulfill this research niche.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study aims to explore the effects of drama experience and self-efficacy on Marketing learners' competence in improving customer satisfaction. These objectives will be achieved through the following specific objectives:

RO 1. To survey whether the Marketing learner's drama experience significantly influences their competence in improving customer satisfaction.

RO 2. To survey whether the Marketing learner's drama experience significantly influences their self-efficacy.

RO 3. To survey whether the Marketing learner's self-efficacy significantly influences their competence in improving customer satisfaction.

RO 4. To explore whether the Marketing learner's self-efficacy mediates the relationship between their drama experience and competence in improving customer satisfaction.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the above research purpose, this study aimed to answer the following research questions.

RQ 1. Does Marketing learners' drama experience have a significant effect on their competence in improving customer satisfaction?

RQ 2. Does Marketing learners' drama experience have a significant effect on their self-efficacy?

RQ 3. Does Marketing learners' self-efficacy have a significant effect on their competence in improving customer satisfaction?

RQ 4. Does Marketing learners' self-efficacy mediate the relationship between drama experience and competence in improving customer satisfaction?

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Based on these research objectives and research questions, a conceptual framework can be formed that is used in the research shown in Figure 1.
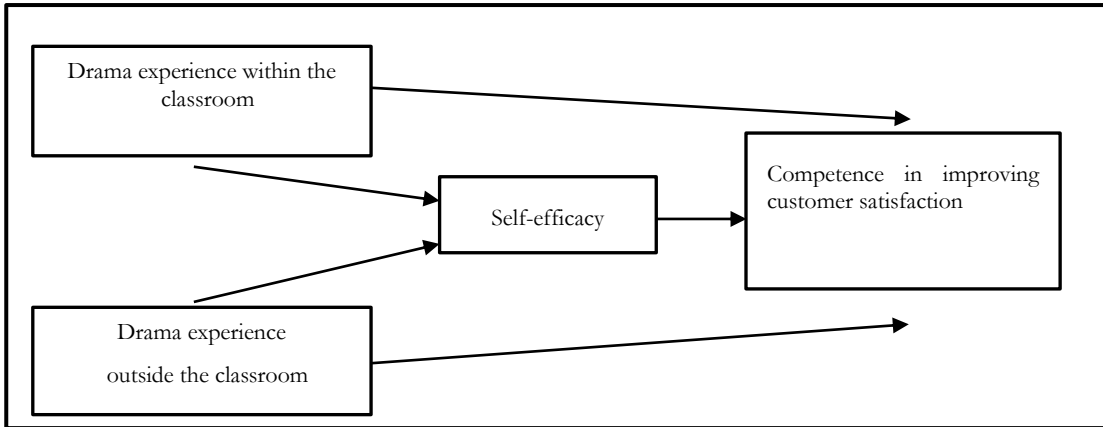
Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

LITERATURE REVIEW

DRAMA EDUCATION IN CHINA

In China, the Drama subject is roughly divided into screenwriting, acting, directing, and so on (An & Wang, 2023). No matter which Drama field learners focus on, their courses often involve creating and adapting scripts, performing dramatic works, and guiding rehearsals of dramatic works. One research has shown that through the presentation, learners' expressive and cooperative abilities are enhanced (Gu, 2022). On the one hand, learners' professional skills impact their stage performance during the final presentation. On the other hand, the performance is attributed to learners' abilities to effectively communicate and collaborate with their peers during the rehearsal process (Gao, 2021). In addition, research has shown that improvisation in drama education can alleviate learners' negative emotions, making team members more sensitive to facial and physical expressions and facilitating smoother interaction between team members (Huang, 2022). This positive impact is not only beneficial for learners' professional skills but also for their mental health and comprehensive development.

For non-drama majors, the university also integrates drama education into the students' academic lives. Incorporating drama into teaching other subjects has shifted the focus from teacher-centered to student-led classrooms, allowing students to take a more active role in class discussions and presentations (Yu, 2020). Interactions between learners are often frequent during the rehearsal of dramatic works. Research has shown that classroom interactions and peer instruction positively impact their innovative thinking and proactive learning (Huang et al., 2024).

Therefore, whether in terms of professional skills development and employment or in terms of learners' physical and mental health, the drama experience has positively impacted non-art college learners in China.

DRAMA AND LEARNERS' SELF-EFFICACY

According to Piriyaphokanont and Sriswasdi (2022), using drama to teach and as a tool for learning management is an excellent vehicle for developing learners' learning motivation and is likely to make positive changes in instruction. They firmly believed that drama successfully positively affects individual learners' achievement, self-efficacy, and motivation. Therefore, integrating drama into learning can enable learners to relate their experiences in the fantasy world of drama to the everyday world. In this way, learners' motivation and self-efficacy are dramatically improved.

Sun (2019) has studied the effectiveness of drama training in promoting learners' self-efficacy. She pointed out that drama training links mental health education with real-life and drama activities based on learners' experiences. Learners can choose topics they are familiar with and ways they like, making the classroom content and form closer to learners. In this case, drama training is supposed to break the core obstacles that hinder learners' growth, such as low self-efficacy, low sense of existence, low value, and a severe lack of courage and

confidence to express oneself. In addition, Wen (2020) conducted an empirical study on drama and high school learners' self-efficacy in English. Her findings showed that learners' self-efficacy in English learning has significantly improved after learning the educational drama course. The reason for improving self-efficacy lies in self-confidence in language expression, the sense of self-realization, emotional expression, and the release of nature (Graham, 2022).

COMPETENCE IN IMPROVING CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Since a company's reputation largely depends on customer satisfaction, enhancing customer satisfaction will positively impact the company's long-term development (Khan et al., 2022). A study examining the satisfaction of 100 microfinance bank customers found that company image positively impacts customer satisfaction and loyalty (Hayati et al., 2020). They described the competitiveness of micro and small enterprises in terms of their ability to establish a good image and their closeness to consumers because microfinance companies cannot advertise heavily on various media. Therefore, micro-companies must choose appropriate methods to improve customer satisfaction and manage customer relationships.

A study has demonstrated that designing different customer experiences based on customer segments has improved customer satisfaction (Urdea et al., 2021). According to the study, developing different consumer experiences for customer segments based on their psychological characteristics, geographic location, income, age, gender, or profession has improved customer satisfaction. Furthermore, Urdea et al. found that through feedback from different types of consumers, multiple experience types will help marketers discover and implement the latest digital technologies, thereby providing customers with high interactivity and trust.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study utilizes Drama in Education Theory (Bolton, 1979), Self-Efficacy Theory (Bandura, 1977), and Relationship Marketing Theory (Berry, 1995) to construct a theoretical framework (Figure 2).
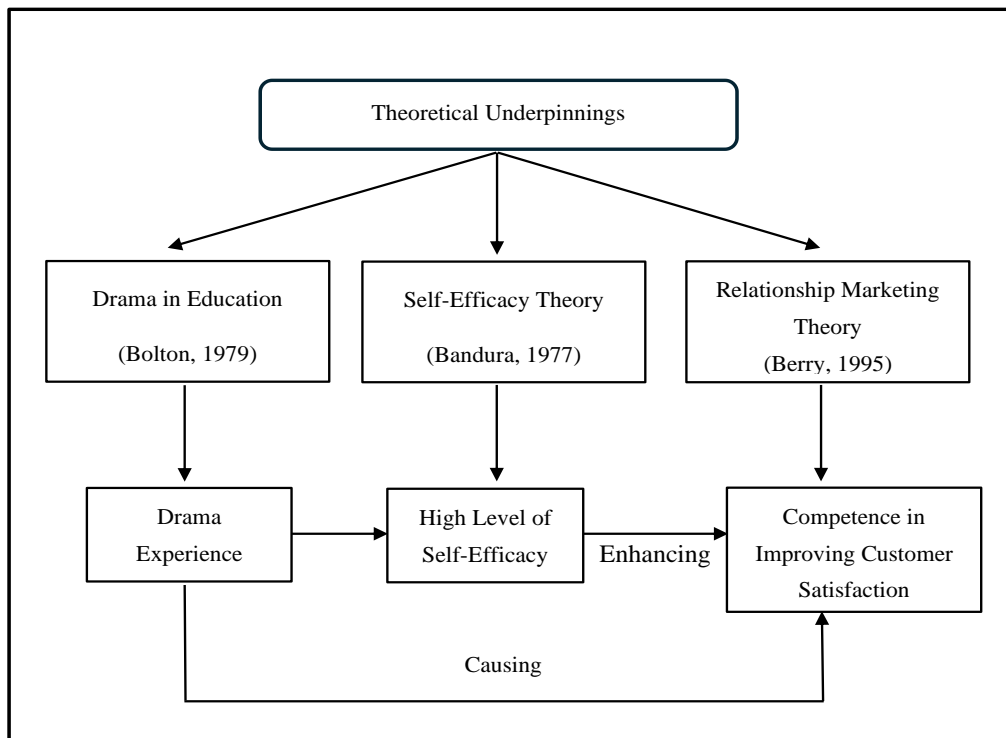

Figure 2: Theoretical framework

SELF-EFFICACY THEORY

Based on cognitive psychology, Bandura (1977) proposed the Self-Efficacy Theory. In the related concepts of self-efficacy, Bandura (1977) pointed out that expectation should be divided into self-efficacy and outcome expectations. Self-efficacy expectation refers to an individual's ability to judge whether he can successfully carry out a behaviour that brings a particular result. The level of self-efficacy expectation, which refers to the difficulty level of tasks individuals believe they can attempt, is speculated to affect the behaviours they attempt and avoid. The intensity of self-efficacy expectations, that is, an individual's confidence in their abilities, is speculated to affect the persistence of behaviour in the face of uncertain or dissuasive experiences (Wang & Hsieh, 2022). Individuals' learning is motivated by the expected outcome of certain behaviours. The expected outcome becomes a direct cause that affects interest, intention, and activity behaviour (Chen et al., 2022). Therefore, individuals will tend to engage in activities that they believe will lead to positive and ideal outcomes, while ignoring those that will lead to adverse outcomes (Bandura, 2001).

RELATIONSHIP MARKETING THEORY

Relationship Marketing Theory has undergone rapid development since the 1980s. Berry (1983) defined relationship marketing as attracting, maintaining, and enhancing customer relationships in multi-service organizations to meet the goals of enterprises and relevant stakeholders. This theory is used to describe long-term marketing strategies in the context of services, and the ultimate purpose is to coordinate enterprises and relevant stakeholders and help them achieve their goals to the most considerable extent.

Pavlovaite and Griesiene (2019) identified that the core of Relationship Marketing Theory is human relations. Considering the overall situation, relationship marketing can identify and establish various relationships in enterprises' production and operation activities and establish a harmonious network for enterprises (Duan, 2019). Therefore, a marketing relationship based on win-win cooperation is very favourable to traditional marketing activities, which can promote the smooth completion of enterprise marketing activities and improve the economic benefits of enterprises (Tao, 2020).

DRAMA IN EDUCATION THEORY

Bolton (1979) discusses different methods of teaching drama, including role-playing, situation setting, acting, and discussion, exploring their use and effectiveness in education. Bolton (1979) believed that drama is a multifunctional educational tool that not only enhances students' performance skills but also supports their learning in other subjects. According to Bolton, he provided specific teaching strategies and methods that help elementary and secondary school teachers incorporate drama education in their classrooms. The results show that drama significantly enhances students' creativity, critical thinking, and social skills. Case studies conducted by Bolton demonstrate the application and effectiveness of drama education across various educational settings and for learners of different ages.

A study used case studies to identify and describe the impact of drama on elementary students with emotional issues at a school, aiming to address gaps in the school's disorganized emotional management curriculum (Lu, 2020). The findings indicated a positive correlation between the participants' involvement and improved self-awareness and personal emotional management. Additionally, a study explored the theoretical framework and practical application of integrated drama education, describing its role in facilitating personal transformation in practice (Ma & Subbiondo, 2022). The research combined drama education with a holistic education, demonstrating the positive complementary effects of both on students' personal transformations. Furthermore, Van de Water (2021) discussed the integration of drama and performance skills in education and social work by incorporating multiple intelligences, emotional intelligence, and brain-based learning theories. The findings suggest that linking the use of drama with the latest neuroscience-based teaching and learning theories, through embodied and contextual learning, can promote inclusivity, diversity, and social awareness among learners. Art and creativity are crucial in connecting the body, emotions, and mind. According to Van de Water (2021), drama and performance are vital for the holistic education of children, whether as a discipline or a teaching tool.

METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study uses a quantitative approach (Tantular & Fauzi., 2023). In this study, the researcher used three questionnaires to explore how drama experience impacts learners' competence in enhancing customer satisfaction and the mediating role of self-efficacy. All items in the questionnaires were rated on a five-point Likert scale, where 1 stands for "strongly disagree", 2 for "disagree", 3 for "neutral", 4 for "agree", and 5 for "strongly agree" (Aybek & Toraman, 2022). The questionnaires consisted of sections on drama experience, self-efficacy, and improving customer satisfaction competence. All items were initially estimated using previously validated methods and adjusted according to the framework of this study. After revising the wording of these items, academic experts in the relevant fields reviewed the questionnaires. Additionally, the researcher finalized the dimensions and items of the questionnaires through a pilot study.

RESEARCH SETTING AND SAMPLES

This study selected a business university in northern China as the research setting. X University is located in a provincial capital city in the north of China, it is a public higher education institution approved by the Chinese Ministry of Education. X University ranks among the top business universities in China.

The participants of this study are 550 students majoring in Marketing at X University. This study used a stratified sampling method to select participants from four different grades, ensuring an even distribution of students across each grade. This approach was chosen to increase variation between grades while reducing variation within each grade.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Data collection in this study was conducted through online questionnaires, aimed at addressing the research questions. Table 1 displays the methods used for solving and analyzing data for each research question.

Table 1: Data collection and analysis

Data Analysis				
NO	Research Questions	Data Type and Collection	Data Analysis	Reflecting Theories
1	Does Marketing learners' drama experience have a significant effect on their competence in improving customer satisfaction?	Quantitative Questionnaire	Using Path Analysis in Structural Equation Modeling with AMOS	Drama in Education, Relationship Marketing Theory
2	Does Marketing learners' drama experience have a significant effect on their self-efficacy?	Quantitative Questionnaire	Using Path Analysis in Structural Equation Modeling with AMOS	Drama in Education, Self-Efficacy Theory
3	Does Marketing learners' self-efficacy have a significant effect on their competence in improving customer satisfaction?	Quantitative Questionnaire	Using Path Analysis in Structural Equation Modeling with AMOS	Self-Efficacy Theory, Relationship Marketing Theory
4	Does Marketing learners' self-efficacy mediate the relationship between drama experience and competence in improving customer satisfaction?	Quantitative Questionnaire	Using Mediation Analysis in Structural Equation Modeling with AMOS	Self-Efficacy Theory, Drama in Education, Relationship Marketing Theory

The instruments used in this study were three questionnaires, focusing on drama experience, self-efficacy, and competence in improving customer satisfaction. After conducting descriptive statistics on these three aspects using SPSS, the researcher utilized AMOS path analysis to address the first three research questions. Additionally, the researcher employed mediation analysis in AMOS structural equation modeling to answer the

fourth research question, determining whether self-efficacy mediates the relationship between drama experience and competence in improving customer satisfaction.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

NORMALITY TEST AND DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

A normality test ensures that the collected data is suitable for multivariate analysis, thereby maintaining the validity and reliability of the data (Yi & Safeer, 2022). The effective questionnaire sample size was 550, with 137, 138, 150, and 125 questionnaires from freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors, respectively. Table 2 shows that, based on Skewness and Kurtosis values, all variables fall within the range of -3 to +3, indicating that the data approximately follows a normal distribution, allowing for further analysis (Garren & Osborne, 2021).

Additionally, Table 2 presents the mean values and standard deviations of all scale items to assess the level of agreement among participants. A higher mean value indicates a higher level of agreement. The results show that the mean values for drama experience within the classroom, drama experience outside the classroom, self-efficacy, and competence in improving customer satisfaction are 3.42, 3.28, 3.56, and 3.20, respectively. Among these, self-efficacy has the highest mean, indicating that learners have the strongest recognition of their self-efficacy. Additionally, competence in improving customer satisfaction has the lowest mean, but it still reaches 3.20. Overall, the mean values for these four dimensions are relatively high and do not vary significantly.

Table 2: Normality test and descriptive analysis

	N Statistic	Minimum Statistic	Maximum Statistic	Mean Statistic	Std. Deviation Statistic	Skewness Statistic	Kurtosis Statistic
Drama experience within the classroom	550	1	5	3.4178	1.18916	-0.599	-1.322
Drama experience outside the classroom	550	1.2	5	3.2807	1.24454	-0.271	-1.6
Self-Efficacy	550	1.1	4.7	3.5596	1.12526	-0.816	-0.87
Improving customer satisfaction	550	1.2	4.8	3.2044	1.34177	-0.368	-1.537
Valid N (listwise)	550						

VALIDITY TEST

CONFIRMATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) is a statistical method used to test the hypothesis about the relationships between observed variables and their underlying latent constructs based on a predefined theory. Its primary purpose is to assess how well the specified factor model fits the actual data, verifying whether the number of factors and the factor loadings align with theoretical expectations (Nye, 2023). In this study, data analysis was conducted using AMOS 29. Figure 3 presents the results of the Confirmatory Factor Analysis.
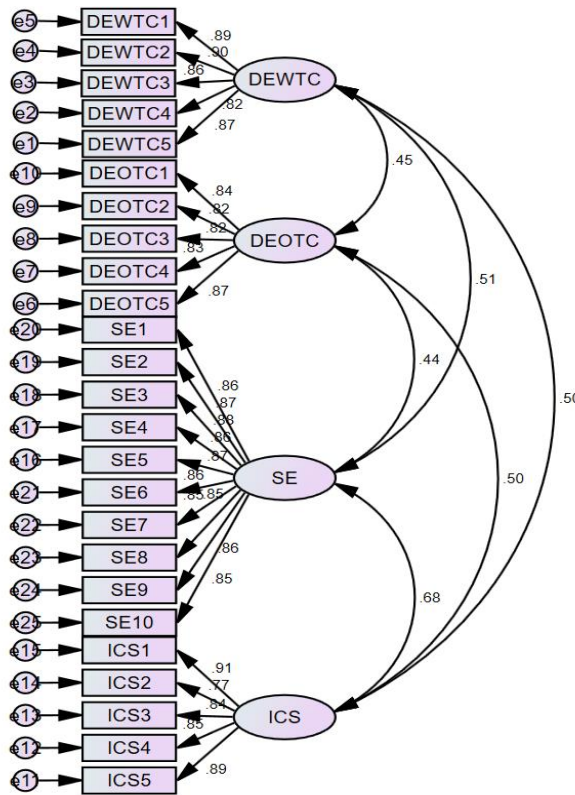
Note: DEWTC, drama experience within the classroom; DEOTC, drama experience outside the classroom; SE, self-efficacy; ICS, improve customer satisfaction

Figure 3: Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Convergent validity emphasizes that measurement items expected to fall under the same factor should indeed load on that factor during measurement. This is analyzed using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and Composite Reliability (CR) metrics. A factor has good convergent validity if its Average Variance Extracted is greater than 0.5 and its Composite Reliability exceeds 0.7 (Firman et al., 2021). Additionally, each measurement item's factor loading should typically be greater than 0.7 to confirm adequate convergent validity (Alain et al., 2020).

According to Table 3, the researcher used the AMOS with the maximum likelihood estimation method for model estimation. The standardized factor loadings for all indicators exceeded 0.7, indicating that the coefficients are reasonable. By analyzing the Average Variance Extracted and Composite Reliability metrics, it is evident that the Average Variance Extracted values for all factors are greater than 0.5, and the Composite Reliability values exceed 0.7, demonstrating good convergent validity of the data. Additionally, comparing the Square Root of Average Variance Extracted with the correlation analysis results shows that each factor's Square Root of Average Variance Extracted is greater than the maximum correlation coefficient between that factor and other factors, indicating good discriminant validity. Reliability analysis of the collected questionnaires revealed that Cronbach's Alpha values for all dimensions were above 0.8, indicating the high reliability of the questionnaire (Inyoo & Polsook, 2022).

Table 3: Average variance extracted, composite reliability, and Cronbach's Alpha values

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	AVE	CR	Alpha	Square Root of AVE
DEWTC5	<---	DEWTC	0.872			0.756	0.939	0.938	0.869
DEWTC4	<---	DEWTC	0.821	0.033	25.151				
DEWTC3	<---	DEWTC	0.86	0.034	27.448				
DEWTC2	<---	DEWTC	0.901	0.032	30.126				

DEWTC1	<---	DEWTC	0.891	0.037	29.486					
DEOTC5	<---	DEOTC	0.872			0.699	0.921	0.92	0.836	
DEOTC4	<---	DEOTC	0.829	0.037	24.934					
DEOTC3	<---	DEOTC	0.816	0.039	24.301					
DEOTC2	<---	DEOTC	0.821	0.038	24.515					
DEOTC1	<---	DEOTC	0.84	0.038	25.514					
SE5	<---	SE	0.873			0.742	0.966	0.966	0.862	
SE4	<---	SE	0.859	0.034	28.111					
SE3	<---	SE	0.878	0.034	29.357					
SE2	<---	SE	0.871	0.034	28.87					
SE1	<---	SE	0.859	0.035	28.119					
SE6	<---	SE	0.857	0.035	27.946					
SE7	<---	SE	0.853	0.034	27.726					
SE8	<---	SE	0.852	0.034	27.657					
SE9	<---	SE	0.859	0.035	28.08					
SE10	<---	SE	0.854	0.034	27.757					
ICS5	<---	ICS	0.892			0.726	0.930	0.929	0.852	
ICS4	<---	ICS	0.849	0.034	27.792					
ICS3	<---	ICS	0.837	0.035	27.001					
ICS2	<---	ICS	0.772	0.032	23.223					
ICS1	<---	ICS	0.905	0.033	31.882					

Note: DEWTC, drama experience within the classroom; DEOTC, drama experience outside the classroom; SE, self-efficacy; ICS, improve customer satisfaction

Structural equation modeling (SEM) uses statistical methods to analyze complex theoretical models, evaluating their consistency with data to confirm or refute hypotheses. Model fit is assessed using various indices, categorized into absolute and relative fit indices (Rappaport & Neale, 2020). Absolute fit indices compare observed and expected variances and covariances, measuring the model's overall fit. Common absolute fit indices include Chi-Square (CMIN), Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) (Beribisky & Hancock, 2023). In addition, Relative fit indices compare the fit of different models. Common relative fit indices include the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Normed Fit Index (NFI), and Non-Normed Fit Index (NNFI). A model is considered well-fitting if three or more indices are above 0.9 (Shi et al., 2022).

The Table 4 shows that all model fit indices meet the required standards: CMIN/DF=1.499<5, RMSEA=0.03<0.08, GFI=0.944, AGFI=0.933, TLI=0.988, CFI=0.989, and IFI=0.99. This indicates a good model fit, so the questionnaire's fit indices are satisfactory overall.

Table 4: Model fitting results

Observed indicators	Evaluation indicators		This model value
	Acceptable	Good	
CMIN/DF	<5.00	<3	1.499
RMESA	<0.08	<0.05	0.03
GFI	[0.7, 0.9]	>0.9	0.944
AGFI	[0.7, 0.9]	>0.9	0.933
TLI	[0.7, 0.9]	>0.9	0.988
CFI	[0.7, 0.9]	>0.9	0.989
IFI	[0.7, 0.9]	>0.9	0.99

The model fit results indicate that the model is well-designed and fits the data well, as all fit indices fall within acceptable to excellent ranges. This suggests that the theoretical model constructed is reasonable, providing a solid foundation for further data analysis. Moreover, with TLI = 0.988, CFI = 0.989, and IFI = 0.99, these high values demonstrate an excellent overall model fit, indicating that the relationships among classroom drama experience within the classroom, drama experience outside the classroom, self-efficacy, and competence in improving customer satisfaction are statistically significant. Therefore, these data indirectly support the validity of the relationships among the variables.

CORRELATION ANALYSIS

Correlation analysis is used to study relationships between quantitative data. It uses correlation coefficients to represent the relationships between variables. Researchers should first determine if a relationship exists and then whether it is positive (coefficient > 0) or negative (coefficient < 0) (Schober & Vetter, 2020). The coefficient indicates the strength of the linear relationship, with direction shown by positive or negative values. Pearson's correlation coefficient describes the degree of correlation: an absolute value above 0.7 indicates a powerful correlation, above 0.4 indicates a strong correlation, and below 0.2 indicates a weak correlation (Rovetta, 2020). Table 5 shows the correlation coefficients between the variables.

The results show significant positive correlations: Pearson's correlation coefficient between drama experience within the classroom and self-efficacy is $r = 0.483$ ($p < 0.05$), between drama experience outside the classroom and self-efficacy is $r = 0.433$ ($p < 0.05$), between drama experience within the classroom and improving customer satisfaction is $r = 0.457$ ($p < 0.05$), between drama experience outside the classroom and improve customer satisfaction is $r = 0.466$ ($p < 0.05$), between self-efficacy and improve customer satisfaction is $r = 0.643$ ($p < 0.05$).

Table 5: Correlation Analysis

	DEWTC	DEOTC	SE	ICS
DEWTC	1			
DEOTC	0.432**	1		
SE	0.483**	0.433**	1	
ICS	0.457**	0.466**	0.643**	1
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).				

Note: DEWTC, drama experience within the classroom; DEOTC, drama experience outside the classroom; SE, self-efficacy; ICS, improve customer satisfaction

The data reveals a positive correlation between both in-class and out-of-class drama experience with self-efficacy and competence in improving customer satisfaction. This indicates that Marketing learners who engage more in drama activities tend to have higher self-efficacy and better customer satisfaction management competency. These results support the study's hypothesis, demonstrating the positive impact of drama experience on enhancing Marketing students' competence in improving customer satisfaction.

Therefore, incorporating drama elements into Marketing classrooms is recommended to enhance learners' engagement and skills. University educators should also organize more drama activities on campus to boost learners' self-efficacy and customer satisfaction skills. Notably, the strong positive correlation (0.643) between self-efficacy and customer satisfaction skills suggests that higher self-efficacy leads to better performance in customer satisfaction. Hence, maintaining high self-efficacy levels is beneficial for students.

Additionally, the correlation between in-class and out-of-class drama experiences (0.432) indicates that learners who participate more in in-class drama activities are also more inclined to engage in out-of-class drama activities. Thus, promoting drama education both within and outside the classroom can have a mutually reinforcing effect, enhancing the overall impact of drama education.

After identifying these relationships, further validation was performed using structural equation modeling.

PATH ANALYSIS

This study utilizes SPSS 29 and AMOS 29 to examine the relationships between factors through path analysis. Figure 4 presents the results of the structural model.
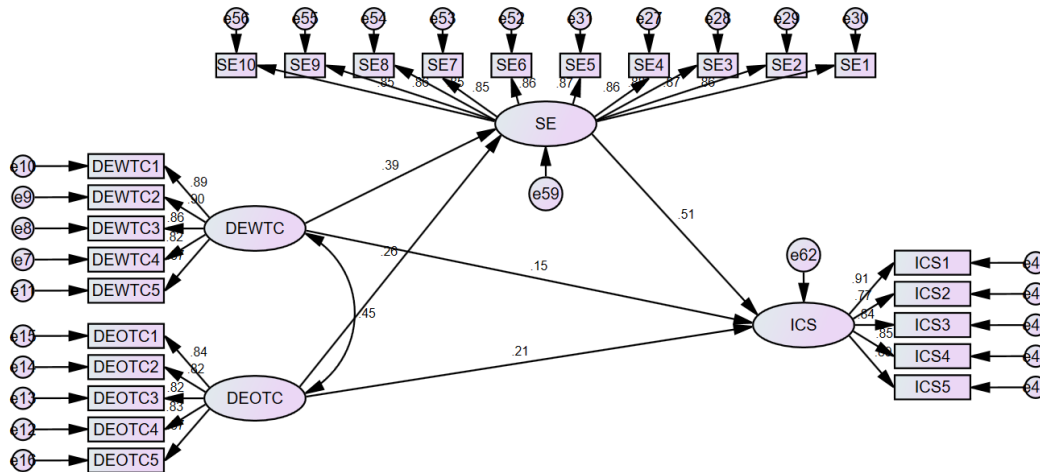
Note: DEWTC, drama experience within the classroom; DEOTC, drama experience outside the classroom; SE, self-efficacy; ICS, improve customer satisfaction

Figure 4: Structural model

Table 6 reveals the correlations between variables and addresses research questions 1 to 3.

RQ 1. Does Marketing learners' drama experience have a significant effect on their competence in improving customer satisfaction?

The path coefficients from the structural equation modeling reveal that drama experience within the classroom has a standardized path coefficient of 0.151 ($p < 0.05$) with competence in improving customer satisfaction, indicating a significant positive relationship. Additionally, drama experience outside the classroom has a standardized path coefficient of 0.207 ($p < 0.05$) with competence in improving customer satisfaction, also indicating a significant positive relationship.

This result indicates that drama experience has a significant positive impact on Marketing learners' competence in improving customer satisfaction. The more extensive their drama experience, the stronger their ability to enhance customer satisfaction. This suggests that using drama-based teaching methods or incorporating drama elements like role-playing and simulations in the classroom can significantly enhance learners' skills.

Additionally, drama experience outside the classroom also contribute to learners' ability to improve customer satisfaction. This means that even participation in drama activities outside the classroom, which do not specifically include Marketing knowledge, can positively influence their ability to manage customer relationships. Therefore, drama experience, whether within or outside the classroom and regardless of its direct relevance to Marketing content, positively impacts Marketing learners' learning and skills development.

RQ 2. Does Marketing learners' drama experience have a significant effect on their self-efficacy?

The path coefficients from the structural equation modeling indicate that drama experience within the classroom has a standardized path coefficient of 0.392 ($p < 0.05$) on self-efficacy, showing a significant positive effect. Additionally, drama experience outside the classroom has a standardized path coefficient of 0.263 ($p < 0.05$) on self-efficacy, also showing a significant positive effect. Therefore, both drama experience within and outside the classroom significantly enhance learners' self-efficacy.

The results suggest that the enhancement of self-efficacy among Marketing learners through drama is not dependent on whether the drama activities include Marketing-related knowledge or the setting of these activities (in-class or out-of-class). Instead, it is the intrinsic qualities of drama elements themselves that have a significant impact. The more drama experience Marketing learners accumulate, the higher their self-efficacy becomes.

RQ 3. Does Marketing learners' self-efficacy have a significant effect on their competence in improving customer satisfaction?

The path coefficients from the structural equation modeling indicate that self-efficacy has a standardized path coefficient of 0.513 (p < 0.05) with competence in improving customer satisfaction, demonstrating a significant positive effect.

This demonstrates that as Marketing learners' self-efficacy increases, their competence in improving customer satisfaction also strengthens. This is because self-efficacy encompasses learners' confidence in completing tasks, overcoming difficulties, and their expectations of successful task completion. These positive psychological cues enhance learners' likelihood and efficiency in achieving their goals (Bandura, 2001). Therefore, enhancing learners' self-efficacy is a crucial factor in helping them better accomplish their academic and professional objectives.

Table 6: Path analysis

			Estimate	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Decision
SE	<---	DEWTC	0.436	0.392	0.051	8.632	0.000	Supported
SE	<---	DEOTC	0.25	0.263	0.042	5.93	0.000	Supported
ICS	<---	SE	0.482	0.513	0.043	11.322	0.000	Supported
ICS	<---	DEWTC	0.158	0.151	0.043	3.67	0.000	Supported
ICS	<---	DEOTC	0.185	0.207	0.036	5.141	0.000	Supported

Note: DEWTC, drama experience within the classroom; DEOTC, drama experience outside the classroom; SE, self-efficacy; ICS, improve customer satisfaction

MEDIATION ANALYSIS

This study verified the significance of the indirect effects in the final path model at the 95% confidence interval using the bias-corrected bootstrapping method. Under the assumption of multivariate normality, bootstrapping was performed 2000 times from a sample of 550. Table 7 answers the research question 4.

RQ 4. Does Marketing learners' self-efficacy mediate the relationship between drama experience and competence in improving customer satisfaction?

Table 7 shows that the total effect is 0.673, the significance value (p < 0.05). The direct effects are also significant: drama experience within the classroom on improving customer satisfaction is 0.158, and drama experience outside the classroom on improving customer satisfaction competence is 0.185, with confidence intervals not containing 0, indicating the significance value (p < 0.05).

In addition, the indirect effect of drama experience within the classroom on improving customer satisfaction competence through self-efficacy is 0.21, the significance value (p < 0.05). The confidence interval for this indirect effect is (0.151, 0.275), which does not contain 0, indicating that the mediation effect is significant and partial. This confirms that self-efficacy mediates the relationship between drama experience within the classroom and competence in improving customer satisfaction.

Moreover, the indirect effect of drama experience outside the classroom on improving customer satisfaction competence through self-efficacy is 0.121, the significance value (p < 0.05). The confidence interval for this indirect effect is (0.075, 0.171), which does not contain 0, indicating that the mediation effect is significant. This shows that self-efficacy mediates the relationship between drama experience outside the classroom and competence in improving customer satisfaction.

Table 7: Mediation effect

	Estimate	SE	Lower	Upper	P	Proportion of effect
DEWTC→SE→ICS	0.21	0.031	0.151	0.275	0.001	31.20%
DEOTC→SE→ICS	0.121	0.024	0.075	0.171	0.001	17.98%
DEWTC→ICS	0.158	0.049	0.067	0.259	0.001	23.48%
DEOTC→ICS	0.185	0.042	0.106	0.266	0.001	27.49%
Total mediation effect	0.331	0.04	0.255	0.414	0.001	49.18%
Total effect	0.673	0.048	0.585	0.771	0.001	100.00%

Note: DEWTC, drama experience within the classroom; DEOTC, drama experience outside the classroom; SE, self-efficacy; ICS, improve customer satisfaction

Therefore, the mediating role of self-efficacy in the relationship between drama experience and Marketing learners' competence in improving customer satisfaction is confirmed. This effect is not influenced by the environment (whether in-class or out-of-class) or the content of the drama activities (whether related to Marketing knowledge or not). This implies that simply participating in drama activities can enhance Marketing learners' self-efficacy and, consequently, their professional learning. This finding highlights the value of integrating drama as a tool in interdisciplinary teaching and underscores the inherent positive impact of drama elements on learners' professional studies. Additionally, drama activities can positively affect learners' psychological states by enhancing their self-efficacy, which in turn improves their professional abilities. This is one of the key findings of this study.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to determine whether drama experience affects the competence in Chinese Marketing learners to improve customer satisfaction, and if self-efficacy plays a mediating role. A quantitative research method was employed. The results indicate that both drama experience within the classroom and drama experience outside the classroom directly impact the learners' ability to improve customer satisfaction positively. This suggests that learners with more extensive drama experience have stronger capabilities in improving customer satisfaction. Furthermore, self-efficacy mediated the impact of drama experience within the classroom and drama experience outside the classroom on competence in improving customer satisfaction. These findings address the research questions posed by the study.

Additionally, this research offers insights for future customer relationship management teaching in China's Marketing education. On the one hand, Marketing instructors at Chinese universities should incorporate more drama activities into their classrooms and use dramatic elements for practical teaching to improve learners' understanding of customer relationship management. On the other hand, university educators should also organize more extracurricular drama activities to enrich learners' academic lives, boost their learning and practical skills, and promote their holistic development.

LIMITATIONS

This study provides new insights into the teaching of Marketing majors and higher education in China from the perspective of drama education. However, there are some limitations. The sample for this study was selected only from Marketing learners at the same university, resulting in participants having similar educational backgrounds and environments. Therefore, the participants' views may not fully represent those of all Marketing learners in China, which could affect the results to some extent.

Moreover, this study demonstrates that drama experience can enhance the ability of Chinese Marketing learners to improve customer satisfaction, which is significant from an interdisciplinary teaching perspective. To further support the integration of drama education in Marketing programs at Chinese universities, more drama educators need to optimize drama teaching, and more marketing instructors should understand and incorporate drama into their teaching.

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