EXTENDING AND CLARIFYING CAUSAL RELATIONSHIPS IN RESEARCH INVOLVING PERSONAL SHOPPING VALUE, CONSUMER SELF-CONFIDENCE, AND WORD OF MOUTH COMMUNICATION

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Theory predicts a set of complex antecedent relationships involving retailing practices, personal shopping value, consumer self-confidence, and word of mouth communication. This study extends and clarifies these relationships by modeling merchandise accessibility and personal assistance as determinants of utilitarian value. Additionally, utilitarian value and hedonic orientation are modeled as constructs that directly affect consumers’ personal self-confidence and social self-confidence. Hedonic and utilitarian values are conceptualized also as latent variables operating through self confidence variables upon word of mouth communication. Except for the relationship between personal self-confidence and word of mouth communication, the results of an analysis of the responses to a self-administered structured questionnaire confirmed the proposed direct and indirect relationships.

INTRODUCTION

Recent theoretical development focusing upon the consumer retail search process (Titus and Everett 1995) posits that shoppers use hedonic and epistemic constructs in their quest for products and services. Research confirms that these emotional and knowledge constructs contribute to favorable outcomes for shoppers and retailers. For example, pleasurable shopping environments translate into more time spent shopping (Wakefield and Baker 1998; Arnold and Reynolds 2003). Similarly, findings suggest that knowledge based shopping environments increase both the amount of time spent shopping and one’s money expenditures (Babin, Griffin and Bowles 1997).

Hedonic and utilitarian environments contribute significantly to other desirable outcomes for shoppers and retailers. Consider the relationship between hedonic value and word of mouth communication. In research that focused upon measuring word of mouth communication, an increase in shopping pleasure was associated with an increase in one’s willingness to share shopping experiences (Paridon 2004). In other research in which word of mouth communication was conceptualized as the outcome of consumer self confidence and personal shopping value, a direct positive relationship involving hedonic value and information sharing behavior was not observed; however an indirect causal relationship involving hedonic value and consumer’s social confidence was observed (Paridon 2005b).

Other studies have focused upon the relationship between epistemic or knowledge based behaviors and interpersonal communication behaviors. For example, although Titus and Everett (1995) conceptualized that spatial knowledge and employee assistance should create utilitarian shopping value, it has been reported that personal interaction with employees (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry 1988; Kim and Jin 2001) as well as the physical layout of the store (Kim and Jin 2001) enhance the potential for the emergence of word of mouth communication. Similarly, when considering knowledge based effects of shopping behavior, Paridon (2004) reported a significant but marginal relationship between utilitarian value, an epistemic measure, and information sharing.
behaviors. In other research, however, only a significant indirect effect upon information sharing involving utilitarian value operating through consumer personal confidence was observed (Paridon 2005b).

To be sure, the preceding conceptualizations and findings have clarified the nature of shopping behaviors and they have stimulated additional interest in the topic. Accordingly, the intent of this research is to build upon the aforementioned conceptual developments and findings and focus upon hedonic and knowledge based shopping constructs. More specifically, this study examines “personal assistance” and “physical layout of the store” as antecedent variables in the context of personal shopping values, consumer self-confidence, and word of mouth communication. The study also investigates the influence that hedonic and utilitarian values exert upon word of mouth communication.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual foundation of the present study rests upon several theoretical developments and research findings. Briefly stated, in addition to the overall framework of the consumer retail search process model (Titus and Everett 1995), recent developments in understanding hedonic value (Babin, Darden and Griffin 1994) and the epistemic nature of retail service quality (Parasuraman, Berry and Zeithaml 1991; Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman 1996; Kim and Jin 2001) form the foundation for specific research hypotheses. Incorporating recent findings involving retail word of mouth communication (Paridon 2005a, 2005b) in the context of consumer self-confidence (Bearden, Hardesty and Rose 2001) leads to the development of additional research hypotheses.

Spatial Knowledge and Personal Assistance

The epistemic construct of the consumer retail search process model (Titus and Everett 1995) represents the shopper’s system of logic. Numerous investigations into the nature of this system have been reported. In department store research, utilitarian perceptions of the shopping experience were associated with one’s overall satisfaction with the marketplace offerings (Babin, Darden and Griffin 1994; Griffin, Babin and Modiano 2000). In a mall study, it was reported that shopper’s orientation towards others enhances their perception of store related attributes (Shim and Eastlick 1998). The authors of the latter study report that store and product related attribute ratings contributed to explaining one’s overall average monthly mall expenditures.

Other effects of epistemic perceptions upon shopping related behaviors involved the quality of the retail service experience. Initial research into this area focused upon identifying the specific knowledge based and personal determinant attributes of store quality (Gutman and Alden 1985). Additional research conceptualized service quality as the difference between the perceptions and the expectations of service based behaviors (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry 1985) and findings indicated service quality contributes to one’s willingness to recommend the store to a friend (Parasuraman, Berry and Zeithaml 1991; Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman 1996). More explicit research indicated that employee’s knowledgeability, one indicator of the extent to which retailers attempt to assure shoppers, increased the probability that customers would recommend the store to a friend (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry 1988). Others (Dabholkar, Thorpe and Rentz 1996) reported a significant correlation involving personal interaction with a store’s employees and the physical activity necessary to locate products. Kim and Jin (2001) hypothesized and confirmed a relationship involving personal attention, the convenience associated with a store’s layout, and word of mouth communication about the shopping experience.

The aforementioned relationships and effects of personal assistance and merchandise accessibility upon word of mouth communication notwithstanding, it has been postulated that these two constructs may contribute to the emergence of utilitarian value. To be more specific, Titus and Everett (1995, p. 112) state that “... epis-
temic search strategies lend themselves to ‘utilitarian’ shopping trips where consumers are chiefly concerned with purchasing products in an efficient and timely manner. . . .” The authors also state (p. 111) that epistemic strategies “. . . may include, but are not limited to, search strategies that rely on the shopper’s spatial knowledge or cognitive map of the shopping environment; strategies that rely on orientation aids present in the shopping environment; or strategies that enlist the assistance of others (e.g., employees, other patrons) to help locate desired products.”

Accordingly, the following research hypotheses focus upon the apparent contradiction involving merchandise accessibility and employee assistance. To be more specific, the observed relationships of the retail service quality model suggest that merchandise accessibility and employee assistance behaviors should influence word of mouth communication. Alternatively, the consumer retail search process model proposition is that merchandise accessibility and employee assistance behaviors should be causally related to utilitarian value. Thus, the first research hypotheses are:

**H₁**: Merchandise accessibility and employee assistance should influence utilitarian value.

**Personal Shopping Value**

Mall and store research supports the hedonic and epistemic postulates of the model. In a mall study, a setting environmental factor was causally related to the excitement associated with the shopping trip and a desire to continue shopping (Wakefield and Baker 1998). Similarly, a stimulating, lively, and interesting mall environment was associated with positive perceptions of product quality (Michon, Chebalt and Turley 2005). In store research, a positive emotional state explained one’s satisfaction with the shopping experience (Babin and Darden 1996). In other store research, shoppers’ hedonic reactions to and utilitarian orientations towards the shopping experience were associated with their overall satisfaction with the marketplace offerings (Babin, Darden and Griffin 1994; Griffin, Babin and Modianos 2000). In a second mall study, Shim and Eastlick (1998) reported a composite measure of product knowledge and emotional variables contributed to one’s overall frequency of shopping and average monthly mall expenditures. Knowledge based and emotional variables contributed to an increase in the amount of time and money spent in shopping (Babin, Griffin and Boles 1997).

Efficient, pleasurable, and satisfying shopping experiences are also thought to contribute to the consumer’s personal and social confidence in decision making (Bearden, Hardesty and Rose 2001). According to the authors (p. 122), consumer self-confidence is the “. . .extent to which an individual feels capable and assured with respect to his or her marketplace decisions and behaviors.” These feelings of competence characterize the personal and the social outcomes associated with shopping decisions. Shoppers who consider themselves capable in and assured of their personal shopping decisions will experience a minimal level of doubt about those decisions (cf. Folkes and Kiesler 1991). Similarly, socially capable and assured shoppers possess a high level of confidence about the social consequences of their personal consumption/shopping related decisions. Stated somewhat differently, when information about the outcomes of the shopping event are communicated to one’s friends and acquaintances, the comments made by these significant others influence the shopper’s consumption related social self-confidence (Folkes and Kiesler 1991).

The preceding developments and findings lead to the second set of research hypotheses:

**H₂**: Hedonic and utilitarian shopping experiences will positively reinforce consumer personal and social self-confidence.

**Information Sharing**

Consumer self-confidence in conjunction with the consumer retail search process model provides also a foundation for additional understanding of word of mouth communication. To
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be more explicit, when consumers interact in a hedonic and/or a utilitarian manner with shopping environments, the acquired information can be passed along to their friends and acquaintances (cf. Higie, Feick and Price 1987; Titus and Everett 1995). This transmission should not be thought of as automatic. That is, since the personal and social nature of the shopping experience (Tauber 1972) leads to the acquisition of information that will influence one’s personal outcomes and social outcomes self-confidence (Bearden, Hardesty and Rose 2001), and since self-confidence influences word of mouth communication (Summers 1970; Reynolds and Darden 1971), one’s personal outcomes and social outcomes self-confidence should influence one’s information sharing behavior.

Thus, indirect effects upon information sharing should be considered. Paridon (2005a; 2005b) confirmed the proposed hedonic effect but did not find evidence of an indirect utilitarian effect. Nevertheless, the author recognized the necessity for additional research into these indirect effects. Therefore, two final sets of research hypotheses appear tenable:

**H1:** Information sharing communication will be positively influenced by consumer social outcomes and personal outcomes confidence.

**H2:** Hedonic orientation and utilitarian value operating through social outcomes confidence and personal outcomes confidence will positively affect retail information sharing.

**RESEARCH METHOD**

The research topic and the causal nature of the hypotheses required quantifiable responses to questions about shopping. Accordingly, a representative sample of shoppers was asked to complete a self-administered structured questionnaire. In the ensuing discussion, consideration is given first to the data collection phase of the study. A discussion of the development of the survey instrument follows.

**Data Collection**

Undergraduate students enrolled in an advanced marketing course at a regional southwestern university were trained and given instructions in personal interviewing procedures and techniques. Then, during a two week period, students contacted their adult non-student friends and acquaintances and asked them to complete a self-administered structured questionnaire about shopping behaviors. Respondents were asked also to provide a name and telephone number for verification purposes. Students were instructed to remain content neutral and answer only questions about the instructions for completing the questionnaire.

All questionnaires were distributed by students to residents of a southwestern United States metropolitan statistical area. In order to insure diversity within the respondent population, each student was instructed to obtain completed questionnaires from a representative demographic cross section of the MSA. After deleting four incomplete questionnaires, 215 useable questionnaires remained. One hundred and ninety-nine respondents answered all demographic questions. An analysis of the demographies of this subset of useable returns indicated the typical respondent is married with children, white, employed, and thirty-nine years old. She has completed at least some college courses and she resides in a household with an income of $38,500. This profile does not differ substantially from an analysis of current MSA census data. A convenience sample of twenty-six respondents, two per student interviewer, was contacted telephonically and asked to verify their participation as a respondent. All interviewees responded that they had completed the questionnaire.

**Survey Instrument**

Recent research in measuring latent constructs has documented acceptable values of reliability and validity coefficients for unipolar scales (Feick and Price 1987; Darden and Babin 1994; Dabholkar, Thorpe and Rentz 1996; Bearden, Hardesty and Rose 2001). Preliminary research
involving the measurement of information sharing was consistent with those findings: unipolar construct measurement generated comparable internal consistency and construct reliability values. Similarly, initial research into the viability of the proposed model indicated improvements in construct reliability could be attained by using shortened unipolar measures (Paridon 2005a). Accordingly, the original sets of construct indicators for the model were modified. The first change was the deletion of the “gift giving” and the “agonizing over purchasing” measures from the original personal and social self-confidence scales, respectively (Bearden, Hardey and Rose 2001). Responses to the remaining four indicators for each self-confidence construct were obtained by asking interviewees to indicate on a seven point Likert type scale, the extent to which they agreed that the statement characterized themselves.

Similar issues involving reliability resulted in selecting four hedonic orientation and four utilitarian value indicators (Babin, Darden and Griffin 1994; Griffin, Babin and Modiano 2000) that demonstrated, by their standardized factor loading, an acceptable level of construct validity. To be more specific, previous research (Paridon 2005a) suggested deletion of a negatively worded hedonic construct indicator would result in improved reliability and variance extracted values. Research into utilitarian measurement (Voss, Spangenberg and Grohmann, 2003) suggested an improvement to the original four indicator utilitarian scale might be realized by adding a direct measure of satisfaction. Other research involving retail information sharing (Paridon 2005a) suggested that deleting the negatively worded utilitarian statement “I couldn’t buy what I really needed” would lead to improved measurement statistics. Thus, utilitarian value was assessed using two original utilitarian value indicators and two substitute measures of satisfaction and usefulness. For these eight personal shopping value measures, respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed, using a conventional seven point Likert type format, with the item.

The antecedent variables for utilitarian value—merchandise accessibility and employee assistance—were selected from research in retail service quality. Two measures about “ease of in store movement” (Dabholkar, Thorpe and Rentz 1996; Kim and Jin 2001) possessed acceptable reliability and validity values. Since the focus of these two indicators involved convenient access to merchandise, a third indicator focusing upon merchandise display (cf. Dickson and Albaum 1977) was added. The selection of employee assistance measures followed a similar heuristic. Four employee attention measures with high construct validity were selected from highly reliable personal interaction (Dabholkar, Thorpe and Rentz 1996) and personal attention (Kim and Jin 2001) constructs. A measure of the agreement with each of these seven statements was obtained using seven point Likert type scales.

The final set of construct measures emerged from research in retail information sharing (Paridon 2004) and word of mouth communication (Feick, Price and Higie 1986; Higie, Feick and Price 1987). Three of the ten indicators from the retail information sharing scale were adopted and supplemented with one item that explicitly addressed the altruistic nature of word of mouth communication (Feick, Price and Higie 1986; Higie, Feick and Price 1987). For each of the four indicators, participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed, on a seven point Likert type scale, with the statement.

For validation purposes, the questionnaire also contained the complete market maven scale (Feick and Price 1987), an accepted measure of one’s propensity to engage in general marketplace conversations. In addition to the previously discussed standard semantic anchors, the indicators for all seven constructs and the market maven measures contained numeric anchors with one representing the least favorable interpretation of the statement and seven indicating the most favorable interpretation of the statement. Standard demographic measures—gender, age, marital status, employment status,
annual household income, education, and ethnicity—were included also.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Preliminary analyses focused upon the overall statistical nature of the indicator variable sets. First, each construct’s set of indicators was evaluated by using the Bartlett test of sphericity and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy. The significance level for each Bartlett test was less than .01. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measures of sampling adequacy were: hedonic orientation, .81; utilitarian value, .83; information sharing, .79; social confidence, .77; personal confidence, .72; employee assistance, .83; and merchandise accessibility, .73. Meritorious sets of indicators generate a KMO value of .80 or better while adequate characterizes measures that produce a KMO above .70 (Hair et al. 1998). Second, an analysis of the Pearson correlation coefficients using the market maven scale (Bartlett test of sphericity equal to 659.76, p < .01, and a KMO of .85) as an anchor suggested an acceptable level of convergent validity. That is, with the exception of one’s personal outcome confidence, all Pearson product moment correlations involving the market maven scale were positive, as expected, and attained a level of significance beyond an alpha level of .01. The value of the correlation coefficient between market mavenism and personal outcome confidence, -.16, attained significance with an alpha level of .05. The complete Pearson correlation matrix is contained in Table 1.

Structural Equation Model Analysis

An initial test of the first set of research hypotheses was undertaken by comparing the LISREL 8 (Jöreskog and Sörbom 2001) maximum likelihood structural equation solution for the proposed model portrayed in Figure 1 with the aforementioned alternative model. To be more specific, the alternative model deleted the direct causal linkages of employee assistance and merchandise accessibility influencing utilitarian value. It, the alternative model, incorporated direct paths from employee assistance and merchandise accessibility to information sharing. A comparison of the maximum likelihood fit function (Satorra-Bentler chi squares, 688.67 (477.36) , for the research model (Figure 1), with 313 degrees of freedom, p < .01, and 675.30 (472.18) for the alternative model, with 310 degrees of freedom, p < .01, suggested a statistically significant (insignificant) chi square difference of 13.37, 3 df, p < .01 (5.18, 3 df, p > .10). While the test statistics for the paths of hypothesis one (see Figure 1), 2.12 (employee assistance) and 4.15 (merchandise accessibility), did attain statistical significance, the test statistics for the causal linkages of the alternative model did not (1.38 and -.57, respectively.) Accordingly, the research model of Figure 1 was subjected to further analysis.

Both the maximum likelihood minimum function chi-square of 688.67 with 313 degrees of freedom, p < .01, and the Satorra-Bentler chi square of 477.36 degrees of freedom, p < .01 indicated a lack of exact model fit. However, a comparison of the model’s CFI of .95 and SRMR of .08 with the recommendation that acceptable true, simple (indicators loading on only one factor), and robust (measured variables not multivariate normally distributed) models should generate a CFI of .95 and a SRMR close to .09 (Hu and Bentler 1999, p. 25), indicates a reasonable model. Accordingly, additional analyses focused upon the reliability of the constructs and the hypothesized causal relationships among the constructs.

The standardized factor structures and loadings contained in Tables 2 and 3 were used to evaluate the reliability and discriminant validity of the model constructs. Construct reliability estimates were calculated using standardized factor loadings (Fornell and Larcker 1981). The reliability estimates (coefficient alpha in parentheses) are: hedonic shopping orientation, .85 (.85); utilitarian value, .88 (.88); social outcome confidence, .86 (.85); personal outcome confidence, .86 (.87); merchandise accessibility, .78 (.91); employee assistance, .87 (.87); and information sharing, .85 (.84). The more conservative average variance extracted values for the seven constructs exceeded the commonly accepted value of .50. The specific values are:
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Paridon

**TABLE 1**

Product Moment Correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Market Maven</th>
<th>Information Sharing</th>
<th>Social Confidence</th>
<th>Personal Confidence</th>
<th>Hedonic Orientation</th>
<th>Utilitarian Value</th>
<th>Merchandise Accessibility</th>
<th>Employee Assistance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Market Maven</td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Sharing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Confidence</td>
<td>.71*</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Confidence</td>
<td>-.16</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hedonic Orientation</td>
<td>.39*</td>
<td>.42*</td>
<td>.44*</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilitarian Value</td>
<td>.43*</td>
<td>.42*</td>
<td>.41*</td>
<td>-.25*</td>
<td>.41*</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merchandise Accessibility</td>
<td>.32*</td>
<td>.26*</td>
<td>.27*</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>.32*</td>
<td>.57*</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee Assistance</td>
<td>.37*</td>
<td>.34*</td>
<td>.33*</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>.33*</td>
<td>.44*</td>
<td>.55*</td>
<td>20.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Main diagonal values are means with standard deviations in parentheses.

*p < .01, two tail test.

**FIGURE 1**

The Effects of Personal Shopping Value and Consumer Confidence on Retail Information Sharing

![Diagram of the relationship between personal shopping value, consumer confidence, and information sharing](attachment:image.png)

*a Significant beyond p=.05.
hedonic shopping orientation, .59; utilitarian value, .66; social outcome confidence, .59; personal outcome confidence, .62; merchandise accessibility, .78 employee assistance, .63; and information sharing, .58.

The preceding average variance extracted values were used to evaluate the discriminant validity of the constructs. Briefly stated, the structural equation model test for discriminant validity requires the square of the construct correlations to be less than both variance extracted values (Fornell and Larcker 1981). The results of this comparison test indicated the existence of discriminant validity for all twenty-one pairwise comparisons.

Structural Equation Effects

The direct structural equation coefficients and their level of statistical significance obtained from the aforementioned LISREL 8 analysis are contained in Figure 1. In addition to the significant effects involving employee assistance and merchandise accessibility that support the first set of research hypotheses, the proposed hedonic and utilitarian effects of the second set of research hypotheses were statistically significant. The negative sign between the utilitarian and the personal outcomes constructs is consistent with the wording conventions of both constructs and the marginal positive relationship between hedonic value and personal confidence is consistent with other findings (Paridon 2005b). The third set of research hypotheses was supported in part: information sharing behavior is determined by social outcomes confidence but not directly influenced by personal outcomes confidence.

Finally, only the indirect social confidence effects of the fourth set of research hypotheses were confirmed. To be more specific, the indirect effect, magnitude .28, of one’s hedonic orientation operating through social confidence upon information sharing behavior, calculated in accordance with Bollen’s (1987) guidelines, generated a Sobel (1982; 1986) test statistic of 4.01, p < .01. The indirect effect of utilitarian value operating through social confidence, magnitude .28 and a Sobel statistic of 4.06, attained a similar level of significance.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The results are consistent with previous research into the viability of the proposed relationships, thereby suggesting the proposed model possesses the potential to adequately and accurately further our understanding of the information sharing behavior associated with one’s shopping experience. To be more specific, the results confirm that a positive hedonic experience, acting through consumer social confidence, contributes to one’s willingness to engage in word of mouth communication (Paridon 2005b). In other words, one’s confidence in their ability to elicit favorable responses from their friends depends upon their enjoyment of the shopping event, and the effects of this pleasure induced social confidence will translate into an increase in information sharing behavior.

The social nature of the shopping experience is highlighted further by contrasting the dependencies of social confidence and personal confidence on utilitarian value. Shoppers enjoy shopping for its own sake even when they doubt their ability to purchase products that meet their personal consumption needs. On the other hand, personal consumption confidence is enhanced when shoppers are able to satisfy their utilitarian needs by purchasing what they want. Furthermore, utilitarian value or the ability to locate needed items, acting through social confidence, contributes also to one’s tendency to engage in information sharing behavior. Thus, for this group of shoppers, utilitarian shopping leads to distinct social and personal experiences. The former may be thought of as augmenting any indirect effect upon information sharing behavior attributable to hedonic experiences operating through social confidence. The latter indicates that one’s personal consumption confidence depends upon the ability to locate and purchase needed items. In turn, the utilitarian value of the shopping experience is directly determined by access to needed merchandise and personal assistance.
### TABLE 2
**Personal Shopping Value and Self-Confidence Factor Structures and Standardized Loadings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Factor Loading</th>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Factor Loading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Hedonic Orientation</em></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Social Outcomes Confidence</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I had a good time because I was able to act on the spur of the moment</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>My friends are impressed with my ability to make satisfying purchase.</td>
<td>.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The shopping trip truly felt like an escape.</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>I impress people with the purchases I make.</td>
<td>.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The shopping trip was truly a joy.</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>I get compliments from others on my purchasing decisions.</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoyed the shopping trip for its own sake, not just for the items I may have purchased.</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td>My neighbors admire my decorating ability.</td>
<td>.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Utilitarian Value</em></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Personal Outcomes Confidence</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The shopping trip was useful.</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>I never seem to buy the right thing for me.</td>
<td>.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I accomplished just what I wanted to on the shopping trip.</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>Too often the things I buy are not satisfying.</td>
<td>.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was satisfied with the items I purchased.</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>I often wonder if I’ve made the right purchase decision.</td>
<td>.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>While shopping, I found just the item(s) I was looking for.</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>I often have doubts about the purchase decisions I make.</td>
<td>.66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All loadings are significant beyond *p* = .05.

### TABLE 3
**Retail Practices and Information Sharing Factor Structures and Standardized Loadings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Factor Loading</th>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Factor Loading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Merchandise Accessibility</em></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Information Sharing</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The layout of the store made it easy for me to find what I need.</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>When my friends give me shopping advice I can use, I usually act on it.</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The layout of the store made it easy for me to move around while shopping.</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>When we find quality service in a store, my friends and I let each other know.</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merchandise at the store was displayed in a way that made it easy for me to examine products.</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>My friends and I enjoy talking about the styles and fashions we see on shopping trips.</td>
<td>.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Employee Assistance</em></td>
<td></td>
<td>When I help a friend by telling her about my shopping experiences, I feel good about myself.</td>
<td>.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees at the store are consistently courteous with me.</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees of the store are never too busy to respond to my requests.</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees of the store give me prompt service.</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees of the store have the knowledge to answer my questions.</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All loadings are significant beyond *p* = .05.
When customers’ shopping and confidence profiles match the profiles of the shoppers in this study, managers should plan their merchandising efforts in order to foster specific positive outcomes. First, as the consumer retail search process model proposes, managers should ensure that the physical layout of the store as well as the efforts of their employees focus upon the utility needs of the shopper. This practice should lead to an increase in the personal outcomes confidence associated with shopping decisions. Second, when shoppers believe that their utility needs are met, their consumption related social confidence will increase and lead to an increase in favorable word of mouth communication. Third, when retailers manage shopping environments, they should focus also upon creating enjoyable shopping atmospheres. The pleasurable experiences associated with such environments should lead to an increase in the social confidence associated with the shopping experience, thereby increasing once again the potential for the occurrence of positive word of mouth communication.

The preceding findings and recommendations notwithstanding, studies should continue into the cause and effect nature of consumer self-confidence constructs. One possible extension would involve studying the market skills component of consumer self-confidence (Bearden, Hardesty and Rose 2001) in the context of word of mouth communication. In addition to examining the effect of market skills upon information sharing, the focus of these additional studies would concentrate on identifying antecedent variable relationships. Continued study of these cause and effect relationships should further our understanding of the theoretical and the managerial significance of designing and managing shopping environments.

REFERENCES


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