

CONSUMER SELF-CONFIDENCE AND PATRONAGE INTENSITY HEURISTICS IN SHOPPING FOCUSED WORD OF MOUTH COMMUNICATION

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A substantial body of literature involving emotional and task focused shopping environments presents findings that suggest a direct relationship between these environments and patronage behavior. Other research indicates that one's emotional shopping experiences and task focused shopping successes are involved in complex views of oneself and word of mouth communication. This study attempts to reconcile these two apparently contradictory conceptualizations and proposes a heuristic based mediated model. Findings from the analysis of responses to a self-administered structured questionnaire suggest that emotional-social self-confidence, emotional-patronage intensity, and task focused patronage intensity heuristics accompany shopping focused word of mouth communication. Recommendations for retailers are discussed and additional research topics are proposed.

INTRODUCTION

Retailing thought continues to emphasize that shopping environments should be designed around themes that have the potential to satisfy shoppers' preferences. In many instances, the emphasis has been in the form of recommendations that retailers should make it easy for shoppers to simultaneously immerse themselves in an aesthetic or pleasurable experience while completing their shopping tasks. A fundamental principle embedded within these recommendations is that one should use color, scent, music, and merchandising themes in conjunction with congenial and well versed store employees to convey to shoppers the idea that shopping is more than an exercise in purchasing. To the extent that shoppers find these themes exciting and enjoyable, they should then be able to transcend and/or compensate for any boredom and/or drudgery associated with the task of shopping (Kozinets et al. 2002). Well executed themes should also make it easy for shoppers to locate, select, and purchase needed items, resulting in an increased level of satisfaction (Titus and Everett 1995). In turn, enhanced

satisfaction should generate an increase in sales volume and an increased potential for future sales (Babin and Darden 1996).

These purchasing and loyalty effects notwithstanding, enjoyable and task friendly shopping environments generate other patronage responses in shoppers. For example, emotionally pleasing environments have been shown to influence the amount of time shopping (Donovan and Rossiter 1982), impressions about the amount of time spent shopping (Babin, Darden and Griffin 1994), and shoppers' attitudes towards products and the shopping environment (Shim and Eastlick 1998; Wakefield and Baker 1998; Baker, Grewal and Parasuraman 1994; Matilla and Wirtz 2001; Arnold and Reynolds 2003; Michon, Chebat and Turley 2005). Similarly, it has been suggested that shopping aids, such as signs and displays, may create a more focused or intense shopping experience (Titus and Everett 1995). Findings tend to support this proposition. When shoppers were able to locate products, their feelings about the amount of time spent shopping was more positive (Babin, Darden and Griffin 1994; Arnold and Reynolds 2003), and an increase in the amount of time spent shopping occurs (Dawson, Bloch and Ridgway 1990; Babin, Griffin and Boles 1997; Babin and Attaway 2000).

A somewhat different focus involving the effects of emotionally pleasing and task facilitating themes revolves around interpersonal communication. For example, in discussing in store information search strategies, Titus and Everett (1995) suggest that emotional and task focusing themes influence shopper's interactions with other customers. Since there is no reason to limit this form of word of mouth communication to in store encounters, the exchange of shopping advice should accompany, and does result from, shopping related emotional and task focused experiences (Babin, Griffin and Boles 1997; Keillor, Hult, and Kandemir 2004; Paridon 2005; Kaltcheva and Weitz 2006).

To be sure, the preceding conceptualizations and findings contribute significantly to the disciplines understanding of retailing practices and behaviors. Nevertheless, the aforementioned concepts and findings suggest also that it may be possible to extend the disciplines understanding of shopping related word of mouth communication by studying this form of interpersonal influence as a heuristically based (e.g., Chaiken, Liberman and Eagly 1989; Chen and Chaiken 1999) emotional and task related information exchange. These communications may also involve consumption specific self-confidence (Bearden, Hardesty and Rose 2001). Accordingly, this research focuses upon the conceptual development and empirical testing of a model of word of mouth communication that proposes consumption specific self-confidence and patronage intensity as mediators of emotional and task focused shopping experiences. If empirical research supports the conceptualization, such a confirmation would enhance the disciplines understanding of the effects of retail environments upon shoppers' behaviors.

CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT

Previous research into the nature of interpersonal communication recognizes that the social activities of consumers extend into the realm of marketing. For example, early work in opinion leadership focused upon group membership and the gregariousness of the

individuals who exchanged product related information (Katz and Lazarsfeld 1955). Subsequent research into marketing related word of mouth communication extended the findings of such initial studies and revealed that consumers who transmitted product related information, or opinion leaders, were: topic specific leaders, self confident, socially active, media active, and information seekers (Summers 1970; Reynolds and Darden 1971; Feick and Price 1987; Flynn, Goldsmith and Eastman 1996).

In addition to the social/self focused concepts that contributed to understanding word of mouth communication, balance or consistency theories appeared to provide an additional foundation for the study of the exchange of market related information. The initial conceptualizations of these theories (e.g., Heider 1946; Newcomb 1953) posited that relationships involving at least two individuals and one object may be thought of as combinations of beliefs and emotions about the individuals and object. For example, in marketing related word of mouth communication, a balanced arrangement of people and thoughts would involve shoppers who enjoy knowing about and informing others of new and/or existing products and services (Feick and Price 1987). Other examples of the occurrence of word of mouth communication embodied or built upon balanced thought (Summers 1970; Reynolds and Darden 1971; Darden and Reynolds 1974; Flynn, Goldsmith and Eastman 1996; Paridon 2005), with several studies emphasizing that a positive self-esteem accompanied the exchange of favorable consumption experiences (Summers 1970; Reynolds and Darden 1971; Paridon 2005).

Conceptual Extensions

In many of the above cited studies, the topic of the casual conversations involved products (Summers 1970; Reynolds and Darden 1971; Darden and Reynolds 1974; Feick and Price 1987; Flynn, Goldsmith and Eastman 1996). Nevertheless, balance theory's emphasis upon interpersonal communication about an object or event implies that word of mouth exchanges may involve shopping related experiential

thought. In other words, shoppers may base their interpersonal communication about shopping on their in store emotional and task focused experiences. The specific precursors or causes—colors, scents, music, signs, merchandise displays and product availability—of these experiences may vary from shopper to shopper and from shopping occasion to shopping occasion (cf. Titus and Everett 1995). Nevertheless, it seems reasonable to propose that the emotional and task focused experiences that they produce should contribute to the emergence of word of mouth communication. Stated somewhat differently, when shoppers' experiences generate favorable emotional and task related thoughts, then these thoughts may act as heuristic cues and be accompanied by heuristic rules (Chaiken, Liberman and Eagly 1989; Chen and Chaiken 1999). These cues and rules may stimulate an exchange of word of mouth communication.

To be more specific, in heuristic thought, it is proposed that in the absence of message specific information and in the presence of a desire for accuracy, individuals base their acceptance of a persuasive message upon generalized rules or heuristics; the rules are activated by cues (Chaiken, Liberman and Eagly 1989; Chen and Chaiken 1999). In other words, in heuristic thought the extent to which one accepts a persuasive message may depend, in part, upon the extent to which one reacts to emotional cues and/or agrees with factual information associated with the communication and/or communicator. Furthermore, more than one heuristic cue may be used if prior experiences have established and confirmed a heuristic cue, heuristic rule, and message acceptance linkage (Chaiken, Liberman and Eagly 1989, p. 216-217). Therefore, to the extent that the thought structures that are engaged in word of mouth communication parallel the thinking that characterizes the use of heuristic cues in persuasive communication, it seems reasonable to propose that shopping related emotional and task focused experiences should accompany or influence word of mouth communication (cf. Wang, Baker, Wagner and Wakefield 2007). Thus, the first research hypothesis is:

H₁: Emotional and task oriented experiences should be positively related to shopping focused word of mouth communication.

The appeal of the preceding hypothesis notwithstanding, emotional and task oriented responses to one's shopping experience involve more than the activation of one's orientation towards word of mouth communication. For example, Donovan and Rossiter (1982) reported that the pleasure associated with shopping was related to one's orientation towards others. Similarly, a self-other association involving one's emotional reaction toward shopping characterized emotional based shopping orientations (Arnold and Reynolds 2003). Both of these studies are consistent with findings from research involving emotional states as causal agents generating self-perception and social behavior effects (Forgas 1992). However, neither of the immediately preceding studies explicitly addressesForgas' findings of a positive relationship between succeeding at a task and one's self-evaluations and judgments of others. IfForgas' findings involving task focused behaviors compare favorably to the marketing based findings involving emotions, self-perception, and judgments of others, then task focused shopping experiences may play a part in determining one's marketing related view of themselves and how others view oneself.

To be sure, marketing related views of one's self have been identified and studied. However, one particular formulation appears to offer a basis for advancing the discipline's understanding of the effects of emotional and task focused shopping experiences upon the self. The rationale for this potential contribution revolves around their conceptual definition of the self. According to the authors (Bearden, Hardesty and Rose 2001, p. 122), consumption specific self-confidence (CSSC), a construct that enables one to interact with and make decisions in the marketing environment, is the "... extent to which an individual feels capable and assured with respect to his or her marketplace decisions and behaviors." The authors continue by stating that the decisions that one makes lead to both personal and social outcomes confidence that embody "... personal

feelings of satisfaction and, in many situations reactions from ..." other individuals, "...including friends, family, and neighbors..." (Bearden, Hardesty and Rose 2001, p. 123). In other words, marketplace decisions and behaviors involving shopping related experiences should contribute to one's consumption related social and personal confidence.

Thus, in the context of consumption related social and personal confidence (Bearden, Hardesty and Rose 2001), the emotionally related findings involving one's view of self and others (Donovan and Rossiter 1982; Arnold and Reynolds 2003), augmented withForgas' (1992) findings involving task focused behavior, leads to the second research hypothesis:

H₂: Emotional and task oriented experiences should be positively related to consumption related social and personal confidence.

The aforementioned research by Forgas (1992) suggests also that emotional and task focused experiences may contribute to explaining the intensity of patronage behaviors. However, these behaviors, postulated to be influence in part by atmospherics (Turley and Millman 2000), may be understood also in the context of balance theory (Abelson 1959). The latter theorist's work suggests that if individuals are experiencing a pleasurable shopping experience and successfully purchasing products, then the intensity of their in store behaviors should reflect such experiences and successes. Patronage focused research supports such a perspective. For example, both positive emotional experiences associated with shopping and purchasing success have been shown to correlate with the in store activities of time allocated to, and money spent while, shopping (Babin, Darden and Griffin 1994; Babin and Attaway 2000). Similarly, Donovan and Rossiter (1982) reported that one's impression of a pleasurable shopping environment contributed to: the amount of time spent shopping; the likelihood that one would spend more than one planned; and the likelihood of returning to the store in the future. The extent to which shoppers frequent a specific store has

been related also to task focused shopping experiences (Babin and Attaway 2000).

Arguably, the immediately preceding discussion involves heuristic thought (Chaiken, Liberman and Eagly 1989; Chen and Chaiken 1999). That is, an individual's emotional and task focused experiences may operate as heuristic cues that influence the intensity of one's patronage behavior. Thus, conceptual developments and findings suggest the following research hypothesis:

H₃: Emotional and task oriented experiences should be positively related to patronage intensity.

Mediation

Balance or consistency models suggest also that one's self-image may contribute directly to the occurrence of word of mouth communication. For example, in discussing communicative acts, Newcomb (1953) explicitly recognizes that individuals may communicate with others from more than one view of oneself. Such a view suggests that one may have views of themselves as self as a communicator and as an object in the communication. This perspective implies that one expresses opinions about a topic and receives feedback from another about these opinions. In turn, the feedback enables and assists the originator of the communication to gauge the direction and magnitude of the reception, and when appropriate and necessary, adjust the opinion (cf. Folkes and Kiesler 1991). This process of impression management occurs also in heuristic thought in the form of impression motivation. That is, when individuals communicate with others, "...impression motivation is likely to be aroused..." as individuals engage in expressing "...attitudes that will be socially acceptable to potential evaluators, both real and imagined..." (Chaiken, Lieberman and Eagly 1999, pp. 234-235.)

To be sure, the extent to which impression management in the context of conceptualizations of the self has contributed to understanding word of mouth communication has been somewhat illuminating and somewhat obscure. That is, generalized self-confidence,

based upon activity interest and opinion measures (e.g., Reynolds and Darden 1974) and conceptualized as a value and attitudinal variable, was associated with higher levels of opinion leadership (Summers 1970). Similarly, a somewhat different measure of the self, Rosenberg's (1965) measure of self-esteem, assisted with characterizing those individuals that engage in word of mouth communication; they possessed a healthy self-concept (Paridon 2004). Nevertheless, the previously cited work in CSSC by Bearden, Hardesty and Rose (2001) suggests that one's self-confidence may involve more than an understanding that higher levels of self-esteem or self-confidence accompany higher levels of interpersonal influence behavior. First, recall that CSSC is a construct that reflects one's interaction with and decisions made in a marketing environment. Second, consider that the decisions that are made (marketing environments experienced) lead to both personal and social outcomes confidence. Thus, one's shopping experiences may create thoughts about one's consumption specific social and personal confidence which may, in turn, be a foundation for the exchange of shopping focused word of mouth communication (cf. Paridon, Carraher and Carraher 2006). In other words, social and personal confidence may act as mediators.

A mediated relationship would be in agreement also with the model of heuristic thought. That is, the heuristic thought model proposes that heuristic cues may be used if prior experiences have established and confirmed a cue, heuristic rule, and message acceptance linkage (Chaiken, Liberman and Eagly 1989; Chen and Chaiken 1999). This linkage involves the distinctions surrounding an outcome, an intervening variable, and a cue that stimulates the intervening variable. In the words of Chaiken, Lieberman and Eagly (1999, p. 216), heuristic thought involves "...the idea that specific rules, schemata, or heuristics can mediate people's attitude (or other social) judgments. We use the term 'heuristic cue' to refer to any variable whose judgmental impact is hypothesized to be mediated by a simple decision rule." Extending this definition to the present study leads to the following conclusion. If consumption specific social and personal

outcomes, confidence, and patronage behavior act as mediators (variables that intervene) between the heuristic cues of market related experiences (pleasurable and successful task focused shopping experiences) and shopping focused word of mouth communication (a social judgment), then the following research hypothesis should be confirmed:

H₄: Consumption related personal and social self-confidence and patronage behavior should mediate the effects of emotional and task focused shopping experiences upon retail word of mouth communication.

The conceptual diagram of Figure 1 depicts hypotheses one through four.

METHODOLOGY

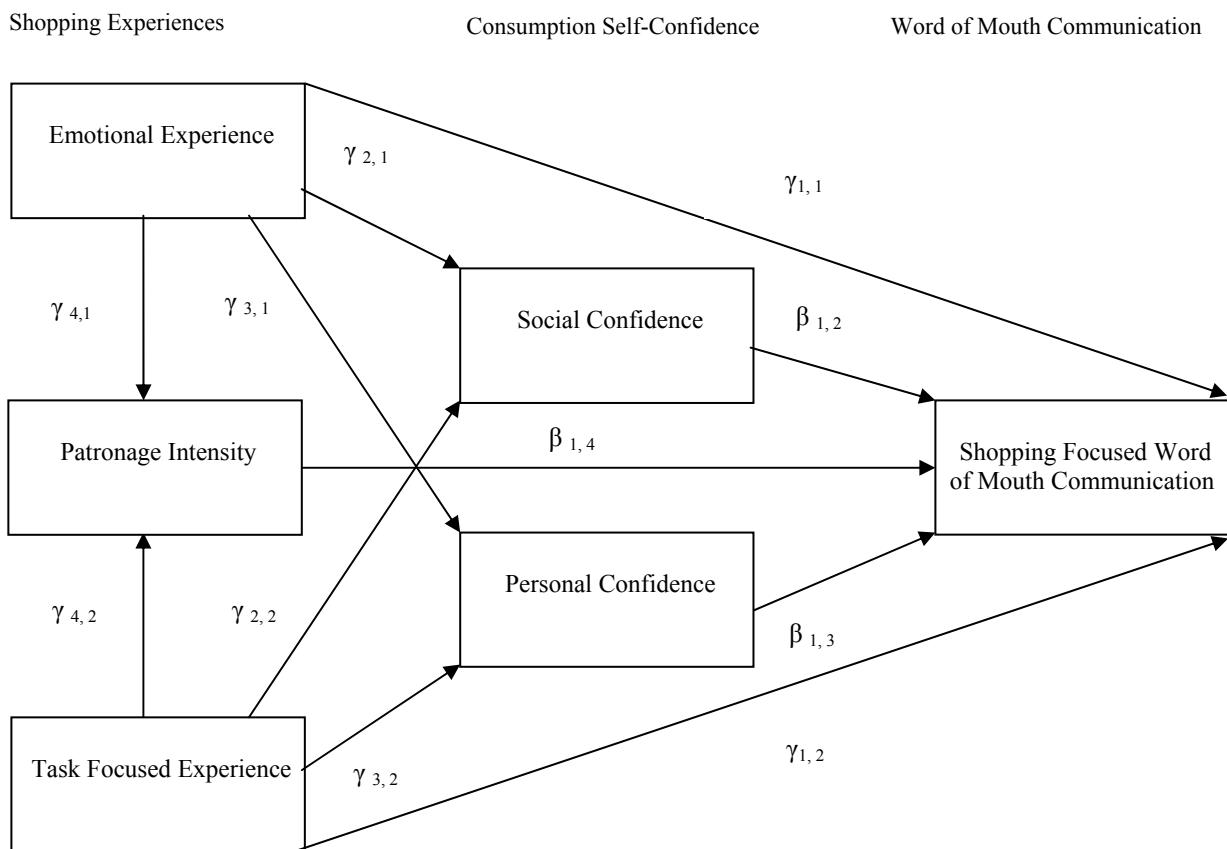
The research topic and the causal nature of the hypotheses required quantifiable responses to questions about shopping. Accordingly, a representative sample of shoppers was asked to complete a self-administered structured questionnaire. In the ensuing discussion, consideration is given first to the data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

Data Collection

Over a course of two weeks, research assistants, trained in interviewing procedures and techniques at a southwestern university, contacted their adult female friends and acquaintances and asked them to complete a self-administered structured questionnaire about shopping. Respondents were asked to provide a name and telephone number for the purpose of verifying their participation. The assistants were told to remain content neutral and answer only questions about the instructions for completing the questionnaire.

All questionnaires were distributed by the assistants to residents of a southwestern United States MSA. In order to obtain a diverse respondent population, each assistant was instructed to obtain completed questionnaires from a representative demographic cross section of the MSA. After eliminating incomplete and incorrectly completed returns (a

FIGURE 1
Model Hypothesizing the Relationships among Shopping Experience, Patronage Intensity, Consumption Self-Confidence, and Shopping Focused Word of Mouth Communication



total of twenty-four), 281 useable questionnaires remained. An analysis of the demographic profile of these returns indicated that the typical respondent is married with children, Caucasian, employed at least part time, and thirty-eight years old. She has completed at least some college courses and she resides in a household with an income of \$42,000. This profile does not differ substantially from an analysis of current MSA census data. A convenience sample of thirty respondents, two per assistant, was contacted by telephone and asked to verify their participation. All interviewees responded that they had completed the questionnaire.

Survey Instrument

Selection of the indicator variables for the six constructs of interest was influenced by recent research in measuring latent constructs that demonstrated the viability of using unipolar scales to attain acceptable values of reliability and/or validity coefficients (Feick and Price 1987; Darden and Babin 1994; Dabholkar, Thorpe and Rentz 1996; Bearden, Hardesty and Rose 2001; Clark and Goldsmith 2005). As an example, selection of the CSSC indicators (Bearden, Hardesty and Rose 2001) was guided by research in word of mouth communication that suggested that statements about "gift giving" and "agonizing over purchasing" did

not contribute to reliable social and personal self-confidence measurement (Paridon 2005).

Similar concerns for attaining an acceptable level of construct validity led to selecting unipolar emotional experience indicators and unipolar task focused measures. More specifically, four emotional indicators whose standardized factor loadings demonstrated an acceptable level of construct validity (Babin, Darden and Griffin 1994; Griffin, Babin, and Modianos 2000) were complemented with four task measures. Two task measures were chosen from the original work of Babin, Darden and Griffin (1994). In addition, one positively phrased task measure was suggested by research into the efficacy of including satisfaction as a measure of market place experiences. The rationale for selecting this indicator emerged from research that addressed the viability of satisfaction as a market place measure. In that study, Bagozzi, Gopinath and Nyer (1999, p. 201) state: "We suspect that previous studies finding discriminant validity for measures of satisfaction can be explained by the way the items were presented on the questionnaire (e.g. separation of measures of satisfaction from measures of other positive emotions) or the lack of a sufficient number of positive emotions." Thus, a context effect (cf. Podsakoff et al. 2003) can be expected when using satisfaction as a latent construct indicator and the findings of Babin, Darden and Griffin (1994) confirm its potential as a measure of task focused shopping behavior. The final task oriented measure, an overall assessment of the usefulness of the shopping trip, emerged also in previous research as a viable measure of task focused shopping (Paridon 2005; 2006).

Research in retail information sharing (Paridon 2004) and marketing focused interpersonal influence behavior (Feick, Price and Higie 1986; Higie, Feick and Price 1987) suggested specific indicators for word of mouth measures. In the current study, the measures address the altruistic nature of word of mouth communication (cf. Feick, Price and Higie 1986; Higie, Feick and Price 1987) as well as service related and product specific statements (Paridon 2005; 2006). Measures of patronage behavior (in store behaviors/activities) were

suggested from conceptualizations of experiential consumption (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982; Holbrook and Hirschman 1986), studies involving store atmospherics (Donovan and Rossiter 1982; Babin and Darden 1996; Babin and Attaway 2000), and research involving hedonic shopping motivations (Arnold and Reynolds 2003). The patronage intensity indicators used in this study focus upon money expenditures, time compression, personal interaction, and future shopping behavior.

Respondents were asked to complete the statements that measured emotional shopping experience, task focused shopping, and patronage intensity in the context of shopping for clothing and household items at their favorite department store. A similar frame of reference was used for the word of mouth indicators. Social and personal confidence measures were asked for in the context of overall purchasing behavior. For each set of four indicators for the six constructs, respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed, using a conventional seven point Likert type format, with the item. These standard semantic anchors were complemented by numeric anchors with one representing the least favorable interpretation of the statement and seven indicating the most favorable interpretation of the statement. For descriptive purposes, the questionnaire also contained the complete market maven scale (Feick and Price 1987), a measure of one's propensity to engage in general marketplace conversations. Standard demographic measures—gender, age, marital status, employment status, annual household income, education, and ethnicity—were included also.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The foundation for statistically analyzing a mediated model builds upon the testing of three sets of conceptual relationships (Baron and Kenny 1986; Kenny, Kashy and Bolger 1998). First, a relationship between the initial or mediated variables (emotional and task focused experiences) and the outcome variable (word of mouth communication) must be established. This relationship is reflected in hypothesis one.

Second, a relationship between the initial variables and the mediators (CSSC and shopping intensity) must be confirmed. Hypotheses two and three address this requirement. Finally, when the complete mediated model, hypothesis four, is analyzed, the relationships of hypothesis one must not attain statistical significance, and the relationships contained in hypotheses two and three must remain significant in the context of significant effects involving the mediated variables. If hypothesis four is accepted, then the case for mediation is plausible and the indirect effects of mediation (Bollen 1989) should be subjected to Sobel's (1982; 1986) test.

Preliminary Analysis

For the conceptual model portrayed in Figure 1, the statistical framework for the three analyses was structural equation modeling (Bollen 1987; 1989; Jöreskog and Sörbom 2001). However, since factor analysis plays a significant part in such analyses, the suitability of the indicators for factor analysis was evaluated using Bartlett's test for sphericity and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy (Hair et al. 1998). For the twenty four measure evaluation, the KMO value was .89 and the significance of the Bartlett test was less than .001. Tests of the measures for each of the six constructs yielded a minimum KMO of .74, and the significance level of the Bartlett tests was less than .001. These tests indicated that an acceptable number of significant correlations existed within the indicator sets and confirmed the appropriateness of using factor analysis as an analytical method.

While the results of the maximum likelihood structural equation modeling that follow provide detailed information about the measures and the hypothesized relationships, the SEMs do not include the market maven scale indicators. Nevertheless, the Pearson product moment correlations for the market maven indicators and the construct measures of this study are insightful in that they enable comparisons of the principal indicators of this study with an accepted set of measures of marketing focused word of mouth

communication. The market maven correlations, each significant beyond $p = .01$, with the constructs are: word of mouth communication, .69; social confidence, .62; personal confidence, -.29; hedonic experience, .50; task focused shopping, .40; and patronage intensity, .47.

Factor reliability estimates (ρ) and average variance extracted (ave) (Fornell and Larcker 1981) estimates for each of the constructs were considered before evaluating the structural equation model statistics. In presenting these reliability estimates, however, a concern for brevity resulted in a decision to discuss the reliabilities associated with the statistical analysis of research hypothesis four. These loadings, summarized in Tables 1 and 2, are not meaningfully different from the loadings associated with the SEM analyses of hypotheses one, two and three.

Rho for the emotional shopping experience construct was .80 and ave was .51. Both are acceptable. Acceptable values also characterized the task focused shopping measures— ρ equals .87 and ave equals .62. Similarly, the social and personal construct estimates, ρ values equal to .86 and .87 accompanied by ave values of .61 and .63 respectively, indicate that the measurement of these constructs also attained an acceptable level of consistency. For word of mouth communication, a ρ of .82 and an ave value of .53 suggested a set of acceptable measures for this construct. Finally, for patronage intensity, a ρ of .79 is acceptable although the ave of .48 is just short of the preferred ave value of .50.

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 suggested an overall pattern of discernible differences between the constructs. Thirteen of the fifteen pairwise correlations between the six constructs met the criteria for discriminant validity. The

TABLE 1
Shopping Experience and Self-Confidence Factor Structures and Standardized Loadings

Construct	Factor Loading	Construct	Factor Loading
Emotional Shopping Experience		Social Outcomes Confidence	
The shopping trip was truly a joy.	.77	I impress people with the purchases I make.	.91
I had a good time because I was able to act on the spur of the moment.	.70	My friends are impressed with my ability to make satisfying purchases.	.88
I enjoyed the shopping trip for its own sake, not just for the items I may have purchased.	.69	I get compliments from others on my purchasing decisions.	.69
The shopping trip truly felt like an escape.	.68	My neighbors admire my decorating ability.	.60
Task Focused Shopping Experience		Personal Outcomes Confidence	
I was satisfied with the items I purchased.	.85	I often have doubts about the purchase decisions I make.	.82
The shopping trip was useful.	.84	I often wonder if I've made the right purchase decision.	.81
I accomplished just what I wanted to on the shopping trip.	.76	I never seem to buy the right thing for me.	.79
While shopping, I found just the item(s) I was looking for.	.70	Too often the things I buy are not satisfying.	.76

Note: All loadings are significant beyond p = .05

TABLE 2
Patronage Intensity and Shopping Focused Word of Mouth Communication Factor Structures and Standardized Loadings

Construct	Factor Loading
Patronage Intensity	
My favorite department store is a place where time seems to pass quickly when I shop.	.80
The next time I shop for clothing and household items I will shop my favorite department store.	.78
My favorite department store is a friendly place where talking with clerks comes easy.	.62
My favorite department store is the sort of place where I might end up spending more money than I set out to spend.	.55
Shopping Focused Word of Mouth Communication	
My friends and I enjoy talking about the styles and fashions we see on shopping trips.	.78
When my friends give me shopping advice I can use, I usually act on it.	.72
When we find quality service in a store, my friends and I let each other know.	.71
When I help a friend by telling her about my shopping experiences I feel good about myself.	.70

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

value of .60 for the square of the correlation coefficient between consumption specific social confidence and word of mouth communication was greater than the ave value of .53 for word

of mouth communication. Similarly, the correlation of .71 between hedonic experience and patronage intensity resulted in the square of the coefficient, .50, exceeding the ave of .48 for

patronage behavior. Although these latter two comparisons suggest slight overlaps between the constructs, the results of the comparisons were not significant enough to abandon SEM based hypothesis testing.

Structural Equation Analysis

Hypothesis one involves testing the relationships between emotional reactions to and task success associated with shopping and word of mouth communication. A minimum fit function chi-square for this model of 122.10 with 51 degrees of freedom attained statistical significance beyond a level of .01. Since the stand alone chi-square test is sensitive to sample size, Bagozzi and Baumgartner (1994) recommend using other goodness of fit statistics, including Bentler's (1990) comparative fit index (CFI), to evaluate the reasonableness of the model. The suitability of using the CFI along with other goodness of fit indices as measures of the reasonableness of a model has been evaluated by Hu and Bentler (1999). In their study, in which they considered robust models (measured variables not multivariate normally distributed) of sample sizes ranging from 150 to 5,000 with nonzero factor covariances and indicators loading on only one factor, they reported that comparative fit indices (CFI) ranging from .90 to .96 in conjunction with standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) values of .06 to .10 suggested reasonable models (Hu and Bentler 1999, p. 16). The model for hypothesis one generated a CFI of .98 and SRMR of .05. Both values are in agreement with the findings of the latter authors. Another goodness of fit measure, the root mean square error of approximation (e.g., Rigdon 1996), is an indicator of the extent to which the model does not account for the indicator variances. Models that generate RMSEA values ranging from .05 to .08 are considered acceptable (Browne and Cudeck 1993). The RMSEA value for the model of hypothesis one, .07, suggests a reasonable model. The maximum likelihood structural coefficient values relating emotional shopping experiences and task related shopping success to word of mouth communication, .46 and .18, γ_{11} and γ_{12} , respectively of Table 3, attained statistical significance with t- values of 6.09

and 3.02, respectively. Hypothesis one is supported.

To test hypotheses two and three, a second SEM analysis was performed. The minimum fit function chi square of 469.24 with 163 degrees of freedom was significant beyond a level of .01. However, a CFI of .95, a RMSEA of .08, and a SRMR value of .07 compare favorably with the criteria for a reasonable model. Table 3 contains the maximum likelihood coefficients relating emotional and task focused shopping orientations to CSSC social and personal confidence and in store activity. Although in this analysis task focused shopping success does not contribute to either social or personal confidence, γ_{22} and γ_{32} respectively of Table 3, the other relationships of hypotheses two and three are supported: emotional experience influences social and personal confidence, γ_{21} t = 5.84 and γ_{31} t = -3.57, respectively; and emotional experience and task focused shopping experiences determine patronage intensity, γ_{41} t = 5.94 and γ_{42} t = 3.53, respectively. Since the results indicate that task focused shopping success is not related to either CSSC construct, a mediated relationship involving these three constructs is not possible.

The final SEM analysis involved all structural coefficient paths of Figure 1. The analysis generated a minimum fit function chi-square value of 605.05 with 240 degrees of freedom. The significance level of that statistic is less than .01. However, the model's CFI of .96, RMSEA of .07, and SRMR of .06 suggest a reasonable fit and the structural coefficients in Table 3 suggest mediation.

To be more specific, in this the third and final SEM analysis, if mediated relationships exist, the requirement that the statistically significant relationships of hypothesis one be transformed into statistical insignificance must be met. With t-statistics of 1.38 and .84, respectively, for the regressions of word of mouth communication on emotional and task focused experiences, the maximum likelihood structural equation coefficient values of .11 for γ_{11} and .04 γ_{12} , respectively, are not significant. Furthermore, the requirements for

TABLE 3
Mediated Analysis Structural Equation Coefficients

Coefficient	Initial Model	Mediator Model	Mediated Model
β_{12}			.43*
β_{13}			-.04
β_{14}			.31*
γ_{11}	.46*		.11
γ_{12}	.18*		.04
γ_{21}		.52*	.52*
γ_{22}		.12	.12
γ_{31}		-.44*	-.45*
γ_{32}		-.19	-.18
γ_{41}		.49*	.49*
γ_{42}		.22*	.22*

* Significance < .05.

the mediated relationships of hypothesis four are satisfied in part. That is, the maximum likelihood structural equation coefficients and associated t-values for the following paths suggest viable mediated relationships: emotional experience influencing social confidence, $\gamma_{21} = .52$, $t = 5.85$, and social confidence influencing word of mouth communication $\beta_{12} = .43$, $t = 8.17$; emotional experience determining patronage intensity, $\gamma_{41} = .49$, $t = 5.95$, and patronage intensity influencing word of mouth communication, $\beta_{14} = .31$, $t = 3.49$; and task focused shopping experience affecting patronage intensity, $\gamma_{42} = .22$, $t = 3.52$, and patronage intensity determining word of mouth communication $\beta_{14} = .31$, $t = 3.49$. Personal confidence did not produce a significant statistical effect upon word of mouth communication, β_{13} , and task

focused shopping success did not statistically influence either social or personal confidence, γ_{22} and γ_{32} respectively.

A final test for the significance of the mediated relationships focuses upon an evaluation of the indirect effects using the Sobel (1982; 1986) test. The results (effect /Sobel statistic/p value) are: emotional experience, social confidence, word of mouth — .22, $t = 4.73$, $p < .01$; emotional experience, patronage intensity, word of mouth — .15, $t = 2.99$, $p < .01$; and task focused experience, patronage intensity, word of mouth — .07, $t = 2.46$, $p < .05$. Hypothesis four is confirmed in part.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The results suggest the existence of three word of mouth communication heuristics. The first, an emotional-social confidence heuristic, originates with an emotional shopping experience that activates one's consumption related social confidence which increases, in turn, the likelihood of the occurrence of word of mouth communication. The second, an emotional-patronage intensity heuristic, occurs when an emotional shopping experience determines the intensity of shopping behavior which leads to an increased potential for an exchange of shopping related information. The third, a task focused patronage intensity heuristic, begins with an emphasis upon accomplishing certain utilitarian related shopping goals which results in specific patronage behaviors that suggest interpersonal communication involving shopping. Accordingly, managers who wish to stimulate an interpersonal exchange of shopping related experiences may do so by activating either one's social confidence or patronage related thoughts. The former may best be accomplished by designing stores whose atmospherics are consistent with the aesthetic preferences of the target market and the latter by aesthetic appeals that result in store patronage. The complement to emotional based activation, task focused activation, suggests that merchandise selection and practices that are consistent with the target market will contribute to patronage behavior, with the result being a shopper who will inform others of the shopping experience.

Despite the positive findings involving the aforementioned heuristics, the results did not confirm a personal confidence heuristic. This departure from the hypothesized relationship may be attributable to several factors. First, the proposed heuristic was based in part upon extending the social judgment work of Forgas (1992) to include one's consumption related self-confidence. That is, the lack of a significant effect involving task focused shopping and the CSSC constructs of social and personal confidence may be due to basing the proposed relationships upon reasoning that was too extreme and overreaching. In other words, shoppers may have compartmentalized their

personal and social confidences with the result that there are some task focused shopping experiences that are not pertinent to discussions about shopping.

Second, the negative wording of the personal confidence indicators may have resulted in the lack of a significant effect upon word of mouth communication. However, for such an explanation to hold, one must consider the significant negative relationship between emotional shopping experience and personal confidence. In other words, for the negative wording explanation to be consistent, shoppers must: 1) believe that their ability to perform satisfactorily as purchasers (disagreement with the personal confidence measures) is unrelated to an emotional shopping experience; and 2) hold favorable thoughts about their ability to perform as purchasers (disagreement with the personal confidence measures), thoughts that would be unrelated to task focused shopping success and one's orientation toward discussing shopping related experiences. The first contradicts one finding of this study. Both contradict the conceptual bases of this study in that the explanations suggest that shoppers are not focused in their thoughts about their purchasing abilities, their shopping emotions, and their shopping focused word of mouth communication. These conceptual contradictions suggest the necessity for more research into these relationships.

However, for those involved in formulating retailing strategies, the findings offer a conceptual framework for studying the design and delivery of the store's retail offerings. The focus of these efforts should be upon identifying the aesthetic preferences and favorite merchandising practices of those shoppers whose patronage is to be cultivated. For example, the effects of specific combinations of sounds, scents, and colors upon consumption related social confidence and the duration or intensity of store focused behaviors should be addressed. Similarly, the contributions that merchandise displays and store focused and product specific information make to increasing the duration and/or intensity of the shopping effort should also be evaluated. Ultimately, the effects and

contributions that these emotionally related and task focused aids make to feelings of social confidence and patronage intensity behaviors should be examined also in the context of shopping related word of mouth communication.

Finally, an enhanced understanding of the antecedents of word of mouth communication may be possible by incorporating complementary modes of thought. Consider, for example, systematic thought, the complement to the mediated thinking of heuristic thought (Chaiken, Liberman and Eagly 1989). In systematic thought the emphasis is upon a thorough evaluation of the available information with the result that the information is integrated into decisions. Comparable processes are postulated by constructive thought (Bettman and Zins 1977) and contingency focused thinking (Bettman, Johnson and Payne 1991). In addition to offering an alternative to heuristic thought, these conceptualizations offer a distinct methodology for the study of integrative thinking. Using the conceptual bases and the methodologies recommended by these theorists, research focusing upon word of mouth communication may identify and clarify other specific task focused shopping occasions and variables as well as social emotional contexts that accompany marketing focused interpersonal influence exchanges among friends and acquaintances.

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