

CHANGES IN PRE- AND POST-PURCHASE EVALUATIVE CRITERIA: EXPLORING THE IMPACT ON CONSUMER (DIS)SATISFACTION

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ABSTRACT

Much literature examines consumers' pre-purchase information search, brand evaluation, and choice processes. In addition, there is a well-developed literature on consumers' post-purchase satisfaction and dissatisfaction responses. Yet, there is little work that investigates *both* pre-purchase evaluations and criteria and post-purchase evaluations and criteria. This paper proposes a vocabulary for classifying consumers' pre- and post-purchase evaluative criteria, as well as a set of research questions about criteria shifts. A study is presented to address these research questions. Findings indicate pre- and post-purchase sets of evaluative criteria are not identical for most subjects, either in the particular items mentioned or in their importance. Moreover, these shifts in evaluative criteria sets are linked to post-purchase evaluations of satisfaction/dissatisfaction, regret and disappointment, at least for less satisfied subjects. Implications for both academic research and marketing practice, as well as directions for future research, are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

Much literature examines consumers' pre-purchase information search, brand evaluation, and choice processes. In addition, a well-developed stream of literature investigates consumers' post-purchase satisfaction and dissatisfaction (CS/D) responses. However, there is surprisingly little work that attempts to link the pre-purchase evaluation processes and criteria to the post-purchase evaluation processes and criteria. Even the dominant paradigm of the CS/D literature, the expectancy-disconfirmation model (Anderson 1973; Oliver 1977, 1980), with its emphasis on comparing the performance of the chosen product to the expectations about that chosen product (or to some ideal or normative standard), does not consider how the evaluation processes and criteria might change between pre-purchase and post-purchase.

Yet, it is quite easy to think of situations in

which the criteria consumers use to choose between brands are unrelated to their ultimate satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the product experience. For example, according to J. D. Power and Associates (1997), the most important criteria for business travelers in selecting an airline are flight schedules and frequent flyer programs. In contrast, the most important determinants of their satisfaction with the flight experience are on-time performance, schedule/ flight accommodations, airport check-in, seating comfort, gate location, aircraft interior, and flight attendants. Consequently, many additional factors, which were either unimportant or unavailable during the selection process, impact the traveler's satisfaction with the flight.

Similarly, in choosing a university to attend, students might be concerned with price, location, reputation, and quality of academic programs, while their satisfaction with their college choice might be more affected by the teaching quality, the variety of campus activities, and the number of friends they make. If situations in which the criteria do change between pre-purchase and post-purchase are prevalent, then measuring consumer satisfaction using only the choice criteria could yield an incomplete or even inaccurate picture of the post-purchase evaluation process. Moreover, as consumers discover new criteria post-purchase, upon which they are either satisfied or dissatisfied, they may very well incorporate those criteria into post-purchase activities such as word-of-mouth recommendations, complaining behavior, and repurchase decisions.

Thus, it is both an important theoretical question and a critical managerial issue to advance our understanding of the process whereby the evaluative criteria might shift between pre-purchase and post-purchase and to explore the impact these shifts might have on consumer satisfaction and dissatisfaction. This research will begin to fill this void. After first reviewing the relevant literature, we propose a vocabulary for classifying consumers' evaluative criteria and then present a study that begins to answer a set of related research questions.

LITERATURE AND BACKGROUND

Relationship Between Pre- and Post-Purchase Product Evaluations

The prevailing model in the consumer satisfaction/dissatisfaction literature is the expectancy-disconfirmation paradigm, which considers satisfaction/dissatisfaction responses to be a function of the consumer's expectations about the product performance, the product's delivered performance, and some form of comparison between the pre-purchase expectations and the post-purchase performance. Under the basic expectancy-disconfirmation model, perceived product performance which exceeds the consumer's expectations (positive disconfirmation) leads to satisfaction, while perceived product performance that falls below expectations (negative disconfirmation) leads to dissatisfaction (Oliver 1977, 1980). Moreover, performance that meets or confirms expectations has been said to lead to a neutral, "cool" satisfaction (Woodruff, Cadotte and Jenkins, 1983). This model has been validated across a variety of product categories including retail services, automobiles, and other consumer durables (Swan and Trawick 1981; Churchill and Surprenant 1982; Bearden and Teel, 1983).

Inman, Dyer and Jia (1997) proposed a more general model of post-choice evaluation that incorporates both disappointment and regret effects. The model allows for the effects of product performance, disappointment or elation (analogous to negative or positive disconfirmation, respectively), and regret or rejoicing (the negative or positive difference between the performance of the chosen alternative versus that of *unchosen* alternatives). Moreover, the authors even suggest that their model may be applied to the pre-purchase decision process, in that consumers may indeed anticipate their potential feelings of disappointment and regret and make choices which minimize that potential. With this pre-choice application of the model, they propose a link between pre-purchase and post-purchase evaluations, such that consumers might be able to think about how they will feel in a later stage and use that in early evaluations.

Thus the well-tested theory of disconfirmation, and the more recent studies on regret and

disappointment, provide strong evidence of a connection between pre- and post-purchase evaluations. Gardial et al. (1994) extend our understanding of the relationship between pre/post evaluative processes by examining consumers' use of evaluative criteria.

Evaluative Criteria

Evaluative criteria are defined as "the relevant set of product characteristics describing consumers' desired product features, as well as their desired product performance levels associated with each" (Gardial, et al., 1994; p. 549). While the term implies no notion of comparison, consumers may use evaluative criteria as standards of comparison about product performance (expectations) or any host of other types of standards (Woodruff et al., 1991) informing product evaluations.

Gardial et al. (1994) provided a first investigation of the potential differences between pre- and post-purchase evaluative criteria by using retrospective personal interviews about consumer product experiences. The authors proposed a series of research questions about whether and how pre- and post-purchase evaluations might differ in terms of means-end hierarchical levels, evaluative criteria used, standards of comparison, evaluation outcomes and emotion responses. They interviewed their participants about pre- and post-purchase experiences in two product categories, and then coded each subject's verbalized "thoughts."

Results yielded a number of interesting findings. First, most subjects did not mention their pre-purchase evaluative criteria when recalling post-purchase thoughts, and when they did mention evaluative criteria, they shifted to a higher means-end hierarchical level. There was also a shift in the types of standards of comparison recalled between pre-purchase and post-purchase, with "other brands" recalled more often and "internal standards" recalled less often in post-purchase thoughts. In addition, post-purchase thoughts contained more evaluation outcome and emotion responses than did pre-purchase thoughts. Not surprisingly, the post-purchase thoughts, while differing substantially from the pre-purchase thoughts, were found to be quite similar in nature

to the thought lists derived from explicitly prompting subjects to consider satisfying or dissatisfying product experiences. These results are quite suggestive of the fact that the *type* of criteria consumers use differ between pre- and post-purchase evaluative processes.

Additionally, a recent study in the area of service quality measurement used a longitudinal survey methodology to evaluate the stability of consumer expectations and the relationship between (dis)satisfaction and pre-purchase expectations (Clow, Kurtz and Ozment 1998). Subjects completed an initial survey regarding their expectations about a local restaurant (which they chose from a list as being one they had not yet patronized) and were encouraged to eat at the selected restaurant. Three months later, they completed a follow-up survey about their experience with the restaurant as well as their recalled expectations *prior to* going to the restaurant.

The researchers predicted that consumers would shift their expectations post-consumption so as to justify their feelings of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the restaurant experience, and results supported these predictions. Dissatisfied consumers shifted their expectations upward, while satisfied consumers shifted their expectations downward. The results emphasize how satisfaction/dissatisfaction responses can impact pre-purchase *levels* of expected performance on various criteria. However, the focus of the paper was on the proper timing for measuring consumer expectations in service quality applications and, thus, it did not investigate consumers' use of evaluative criteria to form satisfaction/dissatisfaction evaluations.

This research indicated that the type of evaluative criteria consumers use shifts between pre- and post-purchase evaluations and that the stability of pre-purchase expectation levels is also suspect. The results of these studies raise the following research questions:

1. What is the nature of the change in evaluative criteria between pre- and post-purchase?
2. What is the relationship between changes in these criteria on pre-purchase expectations and

post-purchase product reactions such as (dis)satisfaction, regret and disappointment?

These research questions provided the background for the study presented herein.

HYPOTHESES

First, we propose the simple hypothesis that pre-purchase and post-purchase evaluative criteria generally will be different. The Gardial et al. (1994) paper found that subjects mentioned different types of criteria in their discussions of purchase decisions than they mentioned in their discussions of satisfaction. Thus, we expect to replicate this result using a survey, rather than a personal interview, methodology.

Criteria Shift (H1): People use different sets of criteria in their pre-purchase and post-purchase evaluations.

We use the following terminology to distinguish the different ways in which the types of pre- and post-purchase evaluative criteria can differ. *Enduring criteria* are evaluative criteria that consumers use in forming both pre- and post-purchase product judgments. *Receding criteria* are evaluative criteria that consumers use in forming pre-purchase product judgments but do not use in forming post-purchase product judgments (i.e. these criteria recede from the consumer's evaluations). *Emerging criteria* are evaluative criteria consumers use in forming post-purchase product judgements but do not use in forming pre-purchase judgments (i.e. these criteria only emerge after consumption).

Next, we propose that the importance of the criteria may also change between pre-purchase and post-purchase evaluations. The importance of receding and emerging criteria is inherently different between pre-purchase and post-purchase. For example, receding criteria are used in pre-choice evaluations, and given some importance weight, but they are not mentioned in post-purchase evaluations, leading to an implied post-purchase importance weight of zero. Similarly, emerging criteria are not considered in pre-purchase, but they do become important in post-purchase evaluations. More interestingly, however,

the importance levels of enduring criteria also might change between pre-purchase and post-purchase. That is, many attributes which were important in determining product choices might be expected to be equally important in determining our satisfaction or dissatisfaction, yet, in fact, they might take on a more or less important role. For example, as long as we continue to make payments, the price of our car is likely to impact satisfaction, but it is perhaps less important after a purchase than before.

Importance Shift (H2): The importance of the criteria will shift between pre-purchase and post-purchase.

Finally, we propose to relate the changes in evaluative criteria to the post-purchase evaluations of satisfaction, dissatisfaction, and regret. When the set of evaluative criteria do change, consumers, by definition, are using a different set of factors on which to base their satisfaction than those they used in making the purchase decision. Therefore, there is a new set of attributes upon which the product can satisfy or disappoint the consumers. We expect that consumers' satisfaction or dissatisfaction judgments will be more extreme when the set of criteria do change than when they are stable. This extremity effect should be particularly pronounced when consumers are dissatisfied with the product experience overall. That is, when consumers dislike the product consumption experience, a changed set of criteria represents new ways for the product to disappoint. Indeed, there is evidence of an asymmetric effect of disconfirmation and performance on (dis)satisfaction, in that negative disconfirmation and poor performance has been found to be more impactful than equivalent positive disconfirmation and acceptable performance (Anderson and Sullivan 1993; Mittal, Ross and Baldasare, 1998).

Extremity of Responses (H3): Satisfaction/dissatisfaction responses will be more extreme when the criteria change than when they do not change, particularly when consumers are dissatisfied with the consumption experience overall.

METHODS

Subjects

Fifty-six undergraduate students volunteered for the study in exchange for extra credit in their introductory marketing course. They completed the survey in one session at the end of a regularly scheduled class.

Survey

The study consisted of a retrospective survey about movies. To begin, subjects were asked to recall the last movie they saw in the theater and how many movies they considered before making that selection. With that movie experience in mind, subjects recalled a list of all of the factors which, *before viewing the movie*, they thought would be important to their overall reaction to it. For each factor they listed, they also indicated how important they thought that factor would be (on a 1 to 7 scale, where 1 = extremely unimportant and 7 = extremely important). They also gave their expected rating of the movie on a 100 point scale (1 = worst possible movie and 100 = best possible movie), and their expected feelings about the movie (1 = terrible and 7 = delighted), as well as answering several scales about their general expectations about the movie (1 = very bad and 7 = very good; 1 = very uninteresting and 7 = very interesting; 1 = very unexciting and 7 = very exciting).

Next, subjects were instructed to think back to their thoughts and feelings after viewing their chosen movie. First, they indicated all of the factors which, *after viewing the movie*, turned out to have an impact on their overall reaction to the movie and how important each of these factors were in their evaluation. Continuing to think about their reactions after viewing the movie, they provided a rating on the same 1 to 100 scale used previously, as well as their feelings about the movie (delighted-terrible scale), and their evaluation of the movie's performance (good, interesting, exciting scales). Next, they answered a series of post-consumption evaluation questions: satisfaction (1 = extremely dissatisfied, 7 = extremely satisfied), disappointment (1 = no disappointment, 7 = extreme disappointment) and

Table 1
Simple Means, Correlations and Significance Levels

Variable	Delight-Terrible (Pre)	Rating (Pre)	Satisfaction	Delight-Terrible (Post)	Rating (Post)	Disapp.	Regret	Glad I Chose This (Reverse Scored)	Wish I Had Chosen Other
(Means)	(5.73)	(80.3)	(5.91)	(5.96)	(84.3)	(1.78)	(1.54)	(1.89)	(1.84)
Delighted-Terrible (Pre)	1.00	.714 (.0001)	.157 (n.s.)	.207 (n.s.)	.257 (.07)	-.208 (.12)	-.247 (.07)	-.265 (.05)	-.321 (.02)
Rating (Pre)		1.00	.271 (.04)	.284 (.03)	.423 (.0001)	-.287 (.03)	-.345 (.009)	-.348 (.009)	-.343 (.009)
Satisfaction			1.00	.794 (.0001)	.882 (.0001)	-.706 (.0001)	-.700 (.0001)	-.736 (.0001)	-.679 (.0001)
Delighted-Terrible (Post)				1.00	.912 (.0001)	-.840 (.0001)	-.804 (.0001)	-.833 (.0001)	-.797 (.0001)
Rating (Post)					1.00	-.875 (.0001)	-.918 (.0001)	-.896 (.0001)	-.863 (.0001)
Disapp.						1.00	.839 (.0001)	.872 (.0001)	.827 (.0001)
Regret							1.00	.899 (.0001)	.870 (.0001)
Glad I Chose								1.00	.953 (.0001)
Wish I Had Chosen									1.00

regret (1 = no regret, 7 = extreme regret), and indicated their level of agreement with two statements, "I'm glad I saw the movie I did" and "I wish I had chosen another movie" (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). Finally, they completed a few demographic questions and indicated how long ago they had viewed the movie they described in the survey.

RESULTS

Means and Correlational Data

As is the norm in consumer satisfaction research, the variables in the study are highly inter-correlated. Table 1 shows the simple means for each of these variables and the correlations between them. As would be expected, *Satisfaction* was significantly positively correlated with the

Table 2
Frequency of Occurrence of Each Criteria Set

<i>Enduring Only</i>	<i>Enduring and Emerging Only</i>	<i>Enduring and Receding Only</i>	<i>Emerging and Receding Only</i>	<i>Enduring, Emerging and Receding</i>
17	3	14	5	17

Table 3
Mean Responses to the Dependent Measures, Split by Stability of Evaluative Criteria

Dependent Measure ⁴	Stable Set (n = 17)	Unstable Set (n = 39)
Satisfaction ¹	5.62	6.04
Delighted-Terrible (Post) ¹	5.65	6.10
Movie Rating (Post) ²	80.25	86.26
Regret ¹	1.82	1.41
Disappointment ¹	2.08	1.64
Disconfirmation ³	.176	.274

¹ 1 to 7 point scales.

² 1 to 100 point scale.

³ 1 to 6 point scale (difference between two 1 to 7 point scales).

⁴ All p's > 0.10.

performance *Rating* (both before and after consumption; $p < .05$ and $.0001$, respectively) and the post-consumption *Delighted-Terrible* scale, ($p < .0001$), while it was significantly negatively correlated with the disappointment and regret measures (*Disappointment*, *Regret*, *Glad I Chose This Movie*, *Wish I Had Chosen Another Movie*; all p 's $< .0001$). In addition, *Disappointment*, *Regret*, *Glad I Chose This Movie* (Glad; reverse-scored), and *Wish I Had Chosen Another Movie* (Wish) were also all significantly positively correlated with each other (all p 's $< .0001$) and significantly negatively correlated with both the performance rating (*Rating Post*) and the post-consumption *Delighted-Terrible Scale* (all p 's $< .0001$).

Both the expected performance (*Rating Pre*) and the actual performance (*Rating Post*) were positively correlated with *Satisfaction* and the *Delighted-Terrible* scale and negatively correlated with all of the disappointment and regret measures, but the correlations with the actual (post-purchase) performance were stronger. Also unsurprisingly, the post-consumption *Delighted-Terrible* scale was more strongly correlated with each of the other post-consumption evaluation measures (*Satisfaction*, *Rating Post*, *Disappointment*, *Regret*, *Glad*, *Wish*; p 's $< .0001$) than was the pre-consumption *Delighted-Terrible* scale (p 's $> = .05$, except with *Wish*).

Hypothesis Testing

The product class employed in this study proved to be sufficiently rich and varied to allow for analysis of the changes in evaluative criteria. The 56 subjects listed 284 total factors as their evaluative criteria, averaging just over 5 factors per subject. In addition, the 284 total factors included 52 unique evaluative criteria upon which satisfaction was (or was expected to be) based. Table 2 shows the number of subjects who exhibited each type of criteria set—only enduring criteria; emerging, receding, and enduring criteria; or some subset of the three. Not surprisingly, almost all subjects (51/56) exhibited at least one enduring criterion. Moreover, the most common patterns subjects exhibited were 1) only enduring criteria, 2) enduring and receding criteria, and 3) all three types of criteria. Only five subjects had completely different lists before and after consumption (resulting in a pattern of only emerging and receding criteria), and only three subjects reported just enduring and emerging criteria.

These results support the criteria shift hypothesis (H1). Thirty-nine out of the 56 subjects, or approximately 70%, had either emerging or receding criteria or both. Thus, less than one-third of the subjects maintained an identical set of criteria both before and after the consumption experience. This result is especially strong given that the survey was retrospective, with both the pre-purchase and post-purchase criteria recalled during the same session. The importance shift (H2) was also supported. The enduring factors became more important, on average, in post-purchase than in pre-purchase. The mean difference between the pre- and post-consumption importance weights was .33 out of a possible 6.0 ($t_{51} = 2.36, p = .02$).

To test the extremity hypothesis, each subject's list of evaluative criteria was classified as either stable (if the list of factors remained the same) or unstable (if there was any change in the list). Using this classification, the hypothesis was directionally-supported but was not statistically significant. Table 3 shows the mean responses on all dependent measures for consumers with both the stable and unstable criteria sets. (Note that disconfirmation was measured as the difference

between the post-consumption ratings and the pre-consumption ratings and was not answered directly by subjects). Consumers were marginally more satisfied and delighted, as well as marginally less disappointed or regretful, when their set of criteria was unstable than when the set of criteria was the same.

To test whether the extremity hypothesis would be more strongly supported when consumers were dissatisfied, the analyses were re-computed after removing the highly satisfied subjects. Table 4 shows the means for all dependent measures for consumers with both stable and unstable criteria, using only the subjects who gave a satisfaction rating of 4 or 5. Only four subjects gave a satisfaction score below the scale midpoint (4), making it impossible to use that to split subjects into satisfied and dissatisfied. It also did not seem reasonable to split the data using the mean (5.91) or median (6.0) of the satisfaction responses, as these corresponded to ratings of "highly-satisfied" on the scale. Splitting the half of the scale that most subjects actually used (i.e., ratings of 4 - 7) into two sections (4-5 and 6-7) seemed to be a reasonable alternative.

Indeed, as expected, the results are much stronger for this subset of the data than they were for the entire set. The stability of the choice set did have a significant effect on *Satisfaction*, *Disappointment*, and *Disconfirmation* (all p 's < .05 for two-tailed tests). However, the direction of the effect was the opposite of that predicted. It was hypothesized that, when the consumption experience was negative (dissatisfying), an unstable set of evaluative criteria presented opportunities of new ways for the product to disappoint. However, it appears that the opposite occurred here. Those with an unstable set were more satisfied, rated the movie more highly, were less disappointed, and experienced less negative disconfirmation than did those with a stable set of evaluative criteria. Perhaps, rather than finding new criteria upon which the product disappointed them, the subjects found unexpected ways that it delighted them. In fact, a review of the subjects' open-ended responses did lend credence to this explanation. (The most common movie choice was "Titanic," and many subjects expressed surprise at the emotional responses it elicited and the degree to which they became involved in the story.)

Table 4
Mean Responses to Dependent Measures, for Dissatisfied Subjects Only

Dependent Measure	Stable Set (n = 4)	Unstable Set (n = 10)	t	df	p-value
Satisfaction ¹	2.50	4.30	2.41	12	.03
Delighted-Terrible (Post) ^{1,4}	3.25	4.50	1.10	3.4	.14
Movie Rating (Post) ^{2,4}	40.50	64.44	1.08	3.4	.16
Regret ¹	4.25	2.30	-1.46	12	.17
Disappointment ¹	5.13	2.80	-2.49	12	.03
Disconfirmation ³	-2.25	-.33	2.26	12	.04

¹ 1 to 7 point scales.

² 1 to 100 point scale.

³ 1 to 6 point scale (difference between two 1 to 7 point scales).

⁴ Degrees of freedom are adjusted due to unequal variances between the two groups.

CONCLUSIONS

This research makes several important contributions. First, it explored the relationship between pre-purchase and post-purchase evaluations using a survey methodology, rather than a personal interview technique. Using quite a conservative test (in which pre-purchase and post-purchase evaluations were measured in the same occasion), we were able to verify that the two sets of evaluative criteria differed for the majority of consumers. Moreover, even for those criteria that were included in both pre- and post-purchase evaluations, we found that the importance weights given to these criteria did not stay the same. In fact, in this study, the enduring criteria became more important post-purchase than they had been pre-purchase.

Another important contribution of this research is the framework presented for classifying the types of evaluative criteria. We provide the first documentation of the frequency of different types of evaluative criteria sets (i.e., Table 2), as well as descriptive terminology for these different criteria. It is important to have a vocabulary for describing

these types of criteria, and how they change between the pre- and post-purchase evaluation settings, in order to be able to conduct research in this area. Thus, we provide a terminology and framework that can be used in future studies of this criteria shift.

Finally, the most important contribution of the paper is the link provided between the changes in the criteria set and the post-purchase evaluations. While the link between the stability of the criteria set and post-purchase evaluations was not significant for the overall data set, it was significant for several important measures when the data were restricted to only less satisfied subjects. This result is consistent with the literature that finds a stronger effect of negative attribute information and product experiences than positive. Interestingly, though, the effect was not as predicted. Rather than an unstable criteria set indicating that subjects found new ways that the product disappointed them, it appeared to indicate that subjects found unexpected ways in which it delighted them. Indeed, all four subjects who gave satisfaction ratings below the scale midpoint had *stable* criteria sets. Thus, this paper continues the

exploration of the link between pre- and post-purchase evaluative criteria begun by Gardial et al. (1994) and provides an important first step in linking these changes in evaluative criteria to consumers' post-purchase evaluations. Clearly, though, this phenomenon requires further study.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

One potential for the unexpected finding that an unstable criteria set led to greater satisfaction rather than greater dissatisfaction (for the less satisfied subjects only) could have been the product class employed here. Although the product category of movies is quite relevant for student subjects, it also has some unique characteristics. Movies have more hedonic (or experiential) attributes than utilitarian (or functional) attributes. There is also relatively low risk with choosing a movie, as the potential negative consequences merely involve the loss of a small amount of money and a few hours of time. In addition, it appears from our data set that consumers are highly satisfied with their movie choices overall. This high satisfaction level resulted even though subjects were not specifically asked to recall a positive experience or pre-selected to be especially avid movie-goers. Thus, future research should include a variety of product classes - both functional and hedonic and those that normally involve both positive and negative experiences.

A second limitation of this research was the retrospective nature of the survey. We believe that the retrospective nature of the survey represents a conservative test of the first hypothesis, and the changes in these criteria sets would likely be even more dramatic when measured at different times. Nonetheless, several studies have pointed out that there are important differences between measuring these evaluations simultaneously in a retrospective study and measuring them at different times in a longitudinal design (Taylor 1997; Clow, Kurtz and Osment 1998). It is an important area for future research to denote exactly how the results are likely to differ between these two types of research designs in consumer satisfaction research, as both designs are frequently employed in the literature and in practice.

This paper was designed as an exploratory

investigation of the phenomenon of shifting criteria between pre- and post-purchase. Thus, while the results presented here are suggestive and interesting, there are many important avenues for future research in addition to those mentioned above. A natural next step would be to analyze *how* these three types of criteria - enduring, emerging, and receding - differ via a means-end hierarchy or on some other dimensions, such as functional-hedonic, product-focused or consumer-focused, etc. The resulting classifications would have important managerial implications for measuring both pre-choice and post-consumption evaluation processes.

Another important direction for future research, following along the lines of the Inman, Jia and Dyer (1997) work, would be to connect these criteria shifts to re-purchase intentions or customer retention rates. Although this represents a more difficult methodological task, future research should also consider whether or not consumers "learn" from their shifts in evaluative criteria so as to make better, more satisfying choices the next time they make a decision in the product category.

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