

# SERVICE EVALUATION AND SWITCHING BEHAVIOR FOR EXPERIENTIAL SERVICES: AN EMPIRICAL TEST OF GENDER DIFFERENCES WITHIN A BROADER CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

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## ABSTRACT

The service evaluation literature has focused mainly on service *process* and only recently started to explore the role of service *outcome*. Another critical issue for both researchers and service providers is the influence of *intrinsic* (i.e., process and outcome) versus *extrinsic* factors on switching behavior. A comprehensive framework is proposed to examine the relative importance of *process*, *outcome*, and *extrinsic* factors for both service evaluation and switching behavior for different groups of customers. As an empirical test of this framework, qualitative research as well as a quantitative study are conducted for a hair salon context, where a service experience offers a rich variety of process and outcome factors as well as some critical extrinsic factors. Gender is used to differentiate groups of customers within this framework, and actionable gender differences for practitioners are found both in service evaluation and reasons for switching. The proposed framework and the findings of the study provide insights and implications for future research on service evaluation and switching behavior in general, beyond experiential services. (169 words)

## INTRODUCTION

Much has been written on service evaluation and there is general agreement that it is a critical issue for both service providers and researchers. To date, the service evaluation literature has been somewhat equated to service quality (cf. Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry 1988) and has focussed mainly on service *process*, especially for experiential services. Only recently have researchers begun to explore the role of service *outcome* in service evaluation (Johnson, Zinkan, and Ayala 1998; Powpaka 1996). It is clear from observation as well as from this recent research that service evaluation is linked to both outcome and process. Hence, an obvious and important issue is to determine the *relative* importance of

outcome and process in service evaluation.

Another critical issue related to service evaluation is what influences switching behavior. The literature suggests that even satisfied customers often switch providers (Reicheld and Sasser 1990). The key is to determine factors that influence whether or not a customer will stay with a service provider or switch to a competitor. For example, Keaveney (1995) found eight possible switching factors ranging from core service failures to price, and six of these factors were controllable by the provider. The intriguing parallel question to the service evaluation issue is the relative importance of service process and service outcome on *switching behavior*.

A third issue relates to the relative influence of extrinsic factors. Mazursky, LaBarbera, and Aiello (1987) write that switching may be influenced by intrinsic or extrinsic factors. Clearly, both outcome and process are intrinsic factors, so, for a fuller investigation of both service evaluation and switching, extrinsic factors need to be included in the framework. By including tangibles in service evaluation, Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988) have also made a concession to the influence of extrinsic factors. However, no study has explored all *three* sets of factors, process, outcome, and extrinsic, nor examined their relative importance for *both* service evaluation and switching behavior. This paper sets forth a comprehensive framework to do so and is applicable to any experiential service (see Figure 1).

Using the framework in Figure 1, researchers can identify factors that are critical to *all* customers, so that marketers can ensure that their service performs well on these factors. At the same time, factors that are evaluated differently by different groups of customers allow marketers to develop specific targeting strategies. Thus, it is suggested that the relative importance of the three factors within the comprehensive framework can be investigated for different groups of consumers based on their involvement with the service (see

Figure 1  
A Comprehensive Conceptual Framework for Service Evaluation and Switching Behavior

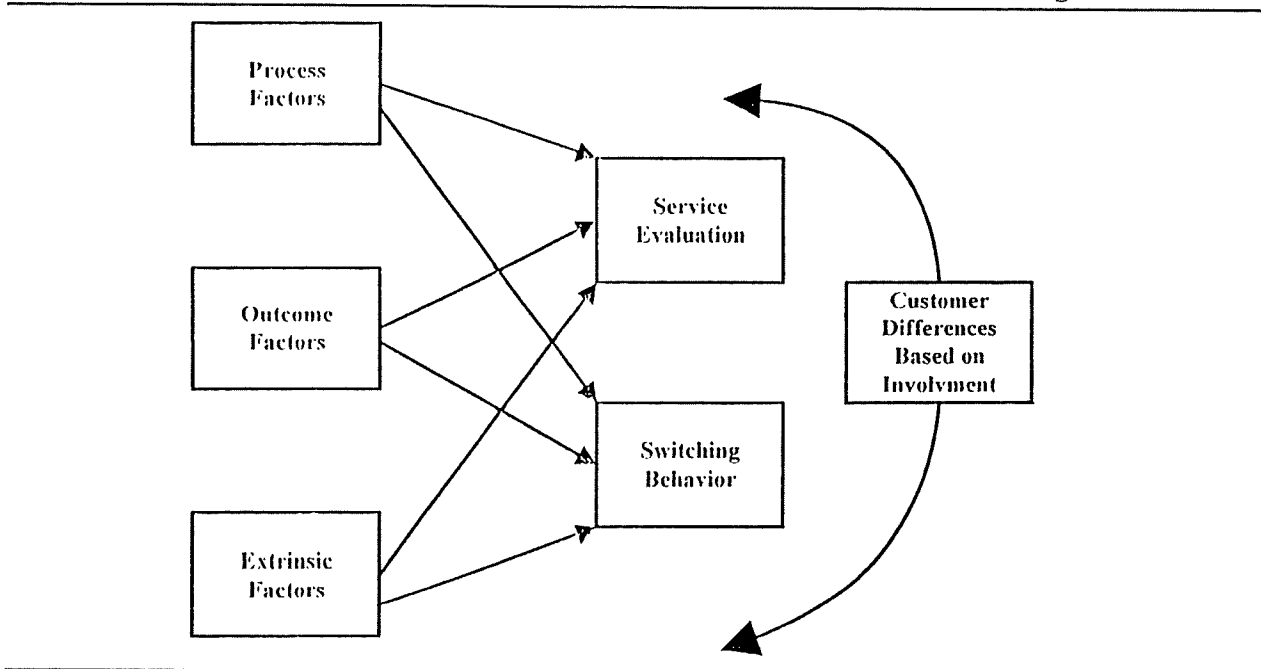


Figure 1). The literature suggests that customers' evaluation of services will differ based on their involvement (Day, Stafford, and Camacho 1995; Ostrom and Iacobucci 1995). Similarly, customer involvement is likely to result in differences in switching motivation. Investigating similarities and differences in factors leading to service evaluation and switching for different groups of customers based on their involvement with the service, is likely to yield actionable implications for practitioners.

An empirical study involving both qualitative and quantitative research is conducted within this framework. The context selected to investigate the issues within the framework is a hair salon, an experiential service that offers a rich variety of process and outcome factors and some critical extrinsic factors. Gender is used as a surrogate for involvement in this specific context, based on preliminary research. A literature review is conducted to outline possible factors for this context, followed by in-depth qualitative research to further develop the list of relevant *process*, *outcome*, and *extrinsic* factors. Finally, a quantitative study is conducted, first to confirm these factors, and then to examine their relative roles in service evaluation and switching behavior

for the two groups of customers of hair salons.

#### CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

Service process factors have received more attention than outcome or extrinsic factors in the services literature. The services quality literature identifies reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry 1988) as important aspects of service quality. Of these aspects, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy are all clearly process factors that a customer would encounter during interaction with the service provider, whereas tangibles would be an extrinsic factor for the service. Historically, service outcome factors have not been included as determinants of service evaluation in the service quality literature.

The service provider's reliability refers to how consistently s/he performs the service (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry 1988). Powpaka (1996) studied service process factors along with outcome and found that reliability was not a critical factor for service evaluation for dry cleaning and legal services. However, in a study across a variety of service contexts, Johnson,

Zinkan, and Ayala (1998) found that a related and critical factor is the service provider's competency, i.e., the skill or expertise of the provider. In the hair salon context, reliability may be viewed in terms of how well and how consistently the stylist provides the customer with a good haircut, and it may be closely associated with the competence of the stylist in the consumer's mind.

Responsiveness is a critical aspect of any experiential service because it is at the heart of understanding customer needs and responding to them (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry 1988). The responsiveness notion may be taken a step further in the context under investigation because customers in a hair salon often expect the stylist to take care of them both verbally and physically. Assurance and empathy, the two remaining process factors from the service quality literature (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry 1988), would both be highly relevant in a context with much dependence on the point-of-contact person. Assurance refers to how comfortable and safe the customer feels with the service provider. For such a personal service as a haircut, the feeling of assurance is likely to be very important. Empathy on the other hand may be more important to some customers than to others. Empathy refers to a deeper understanding and feeling for the customer on the part of the service provider and this is obviously critical to some customers but not necessarily to everyone. Powpaka (1996) found that all three factors, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy, to be critical for service evaluation.

Outcome factors related to service evaluation have received relatively less attention. Yet, in Powpaka's (1996) study, outcome of the service is an important determinant of service evaluation and explains more variance than process factors alone. Other researchers have examined both service outcome and emotion after the service encounter and found that service outcome influences the emotional response of the customer and both affect future customer behavior (Johnson and Zinkan 1991; Johnson, Zinkan, and Ayala 1998). In a broader sense, both the actual service outcome and the feelings associated with this outcome can be viewed as outcome factors, in contrast to process factors. For the haircutting experience, possible outcome factors would include the appearance of the haircut, how the customer feels after the

haircut, and his/her self-confidence.

With regard to appearance, Richins (1991) found that young females compare their attractiveness with that of models in ads targeted toward them and that exposure to advertising containing idealized images of physical attractiveness, will, at least temporarily, lower female viewers' satisfaction with their own physical attractiveness. One solution to this state might be to take steps to enhance physical appearance, and a fairly easy way to do so is to get a haircut. In this case, the clear service outcome that these customers are looking for in getting a haircut is improved appearance and/or attractiveness.

Another outcome factor of relevance is how the customer feels after the haircut. Swinyard (1993) found that the quality of the shopping experience has a significant effect on the customer's mood; compared to people who have had a bad shopping experience, those who have a good experience will be in a more positive mood. This has direct application to getting a haircut. If customers have a good experience with the stylist, they are more likely to be in a good mood. Further, getting a haircut is not simply a typical service situation. Getting a haircut for some people could be considered hedonic consumption because it includes multi-sensory experiences and may include fantasy imagery (cf. Hirschman and Holbrook 1982). Hirschman and Holbrook write that emotional responses are considered to be a major motivator for the consumption of certain goods and services, and that hedonic consumption is mainly engaged in for the feelings it creates in the consumer. It is certainly conceivable that many customers specifically seek "feeling good" as an outcome when they go to get a haircut.

Self-confidence may be a third outcome factor for this context. The literature suggests a close link between self-image (tied to appearance) and self-confidence. Thompson and Hirschman (1995) write that self-image is closely tied to body image and that self-conceptions of poor body image can lead to low self-esteem or confidence. These ideas have direct relevance to the haircutting experience. A poor haircut directly impacts a person's appearance and self-perceptions of a poor haircut can lead to a lack of self-confidence. At the same time, a good haircut has the potential to increase

self-confidence. Thompson and Haytko (1997) discuss how being fashionable can influence self-identity and social-identity. Schouten (1991) found that customers use plastic surgery to change their appearance, and in turn, change their self-concept. The customers in his study had increased positive feelings of self-evaluation and felt that their appearance had improved. In addition, these changes brought about increased confidence in their work and social environments. Similarly, by wearing a trendy hairstyle, people are able to create a "look" for themselves and establish their self-identity (and/or social identity). In the process, they change not just their appearance but also their level of self-confidence in a variety of settings.

Mazursky, LaBarbera, and Aiello (1987) suggest that when extrinsic factors are able to induce switching, customers may switch despite a high service evaluation. In other words, even if customers view the process and outcome well, if they are motivated by extrinsic factors, the effort spent on ensuring a high quality of process and/or outcome may be somewhat futile. This possibility makes the examination of extrinsic factors an important issue. Typical extrinsic factors for any service experience would be the physical environment and costs (both monetary and non-monetary) associated with obtaining the service. These extrinsic factors would certainly apply to the haircutting experience.

Having reviewed the literature for intrinsic factors related to service process and service outcome, as well as extrinsic factors that can affect evaluation or cause switching, a search is conducted for relevant studies on gender differences. For example, in a study on emotion related to hospital stays, Dube and Morgan (1996) found that men's evaluations were more likely to take positive trend effects into consideration and women's evaluations were more likely to take negative trend effects into consideration. In a study on service provider gender using fast food restaurants, haircutting salons, and dental offices, Fischer, Gainer, and Bristor (1997) looked for gender effects in customer evaluations of service provided by men versus women but did not find consistent patterns; both male and female customers thought that the gender of the provider did not influence the service provided. Finally, in

a study of automobile ownership, Moutinho and Goode (1995) found that self-image had a greater role in overall satisfaction for men than for women, and that men had a greater need to impress others than did women. However, the findings may differ across contexts. For example, self-image and the need to impress others may be more important to women in a haircutting context.

## METHODOLOGY

### Qualitative Pilot Study

Students in three classes were informally interviewed in group settings about what was important to them in getting a haircut. The men (about 15 in all were vocal about the issue) appeared to be surprised that the haircutting experience was important (suggesting low involvement). Further, they mentioned (across the board) that what was important to them was a low price and a convenient location. Women on the other hand (about 20 in all voiced their thoughts) appeared to be much more involved with the haircutting experience. They mentioned the importance of a good haircut, being pampered by the stylist, and feeling good after a haircut. In addition, women in general seemed willing and eager to talk about getting their hair cut and to share experiences. Noting these differences, we decided to conduct in-depth interviews with women to determine the full range of what they considered to be important factors for the haircutting experience.

Qualitative exploratory interviews were conducted with twenty female respondents, ranging in age from twenty to fifty, and representing students, housewives, and secretaries. Respondents were also selected on the basis of hair length (short, medium, or long) to facilitate a well-rounded sample. At the beginning of each interview a few minutes were used to make the respondents feel comfortable and at ease with the interviewer. A friendly demeanor and assurance of confidentiality encouraged respondents to answer questions openly and freely.

A questionnaire was used in the pilot study to ensure that a variety of haircutting experiences were captured in each interview. Open-ended

questions were used to allow an in-depth exploration of haircutting experiences and revealed what was important to respondents in evaluating these experiences. Respondents were asked to: 1) Describe a good experience with your hair stylist 2) Describe a bad experience with your hair stylist 3) What makes you stay with your hairstylist? 4) What would make you change to another stylist 5) How do you know when you have a "really great" haircut? 6) How does your hair affect the way you feel about yourself? The order of the questions (or statements) was randomly selected for each respondent to reduce order effects.

During the discussion, a few planned probes were introduced, as needed, to have respondents recall incidents that revealed other factors that were important to them. Probes such as, "Was this a typical visit to the stylist?" or "Why was this important to you?" are examples. All responses were noted in written format and categorized following the completion of the interview. A typical interview lasted between 30-45 minutes.

A major purpose of the pilot study was to help establish the domain of the research. By using emergent theme analysis we were able to group the responses into several categories. Respondents talked about the stylist being able to cut hair well and quickly. We termed these factors competence of stylist and speed of service, and recognized that they could be related to each other and might tie in with the reliability factor from the literature. Interviewees also talked about responsiveness of the stylist and their responses could be grouped along three themes: verbal responsiveness, physical responsiveness, and pampering. Responsiveness is a dominant theme in the services literature, and the pampering may reflect the nature of the haircutting experience where customers indulge themselves and seek a hedonic experience. Other themes that emerged could best be labeled comfort with the stylist and rapport (see Gremler and Gwinner 1998) with the stylist. The former is close to the assurance factor in the literature and the latter is analogous to empathy. A theme somewhat tied to rapport was a long-term relationship with the stylist. Unlike the other themes which captured service process, this theme is not part of the service process, yet it is closely

linked with rapport, a process factor. The respondents made it clear that a long-term relationship was not an expected outcome of their interaction with the stylist, but rather an antecedent to their evaluation of the service.

In terms of service outcome, respondents spoke in great detail about how they looked after a haircut and how this affected their confidence and their interactions with others. We grouped these responses into themes that were labeled appearance, self-confidence, and focus of attention. The former two had been anticipated from the literature; the last factor seemed to be tied to self image and could have some overlap with self-confidence. The other outcome theme was clearly related to feelings as anticipated. Respondents talked about feeling good, bad, happy, unhappy, angry, and so on, after getting a haircut. It appeared that haircutting experiences were almost always associated with feelings, either good or bad.

Lastly, the only extrinsic themes that emerged were salon-related (atmosphere, cleanliness, and location) and price-related (price going up or price related to competition). Interestingly, only a few women mentioned thoughts that led to these themes as compared to responses by men in our early informal interviews. Males had consistently mentioned only the location of the salon (convenience) and price as important factors.

### Item Generation and Data Collection

Following the pilot study, items were developed for each theme or construct that respondents had indicated was important to the haircutting experience. The wording of the items was taken from the thoughts expressed in the pilot study in relation to specific themes. The full list of the sixty-two items associated with the constructs is shown in Tables 1A through 1F. In addition, fifteen items were developed to capture switching behavior. The respondents were specifically asked what would cause them to switch to a different stylist. The themes that emerged were listed (e.g., no longer comfortable with stylist, stylist or I relocated to another town) and specific items were developed (one for each theme) to measure whether switching behavior was indeed related to these themes. Finally, three trade-off items were

**Table 1A**  
**Factor Analysis: Competency and Speed**

<u>Item</u>	<u>Competence</u>	<u>Speed</u>
The competency level of my stylist is very important to me	.845	
I want my stylist to be efficient	.816	
I want a stylist who can create different "looks" if asked	.694	
I like my stylist to be fast		.921
It is important to me that my stylist works quickly		.905
Model fit: P2 = 28.69, df = 4, std. RMR = 0.07, NFI = 0.94, CFI = 0.94		

**Table 1B**  
**Factor Analysis: Long Term Relationship and Rapport**

<u>Item</u>	<u>Long Term Relationship</u>	<u>Rapport</u>
I want my stylist to keep a journal on my hair	.811	
I want my stylist to be familiar with and "know" my hair	.649	
It is important to me that my stylist continues to give me the same amount of attention as when I first started with him/her	.566	
I want a long-term relationship with my stylist	.523	
I want my stylist to be friendly		.829
It is important that I like my stylist as a person		.732
I need a stylist who cares about me		.664
It is important to me that my stylist knows my name and remembers me		.643
I want a personal rapport with my stylist		.575
Model fit: P2 = 99.74, df = 26, std. RMR = 0.05, NFI = 0.91, CFI = 0.93		

developed to capture the relative importance of price versus feelings, appearance (good haircut) versus responsiveness, and long-term relationship versus competence. The idea was to explore the relative importance of the various factors in a somewhat different way as a means for verification. Seven-point Likert scales were used to measure responses on all the items.

The full 80-item questionnaire was administered in undergraduate classes at a major U.S. university. It was decided to use a student sample in order to obtain a sufficiently large sample to test all the constructs. Moreover, we needed a large sample with roughly equal numbers of men and women, which would be an arduous task to collect at hair salons.

The respondents were not asked to rate their stylist or salon. They were simply asked what was important to them in getting a haircut and then requested to fill out the questionnaire. It was

mentioned that there were no right or wrong answers and that the researchers were interested in the respondents' honest answers. The study yielded a total of 328 completed questionnaires, of which about half (165) were females.

### **Factor Analysis**

Exploratory factor analysis conducted on all the items together failed to yield meaningful factors as is often the case with a large number of constructs. However, exploratory factor analysis conducted on groups of items where constructs were expected to be related yielded clear and meaningful factors (see items and factor loadings in Tables 1A-F). This was reassuring as items for similar constructs often tend to load on one factor in exploratory factor analysis. The factors matched the themes developed through the qualitative interviews. In fact, items related to

**Table 1C**  
**Factor Analysis: Verbally and Physically Responsive, and Pampering**

<u>Item</u>	<u>Verbally Responsive</u>	<u>Physically Responsive</u>	<u>Pampering</u>
It is important to me that my stylist does what I ask	.786		
I want my stylist to listen to me	.768		
I need a stylist with whom I have good communication	.695		
I like my stylist to ask questions about my hair needs	.595		
I like it when my stylist massages my scalp		.879	
I like it when my stylist washes my hair		.863	
It is important to me that my stylist informs me about hair trends			.812
I like my stylist to pamper me			.752
I like it when my stylist brings me something to read			.609
I like it when my stylist brings me something to drink			.403
Model fit: P2 = 106.74, df = 24, std. RMR = 0.06, NFI = 0.90, CFI = 0.90			

**Table 1D**  
**Factor Analysis: Appearance, Self-Confidence, Focus of Attention**

<u>Item</u>	<u>Appearance</u>	<u>Self-Confidence</u>	<u>Focus of Attention</u>
I want a haircut that suits my looks	.771		
I want a haircut that is fashionable	.714		
I want a haircut that looks good	.686		
I want to be able to make my hair look like the stylist makes it look	.669		
It is important to me that my hair is easy to fix	.509		
I would be reluctant to go out in public if I had a bad haircut		.703	
I think people judge me by my hair		.665	
If I have a bad haircut it ruins the way I look		.637	
A good hairstyle improves my performance in daily activities		.568	
My hairstyle affects my self-confidence		dropped	
I feel more secure when I have a good hairstyle		dropped	
I like to be noticed if I have a good haircut			.811
I like the attention a good hairstyle brings			.787
I think my hairstyle says something about my personality			.689
I want people to ask me who my stylist is			.611
If I have a good haircut I look much more attractive			.589
My hairstyle shows how fashionable I am			.570
Model fit: P2 = 218.27, df = 62, std. RMR = 0.06, NFI = 0.88, CFI = 0.89			

competence and speed emerged as separate factors although we had expected that they might load on one factor. Similarly, items related to outcome

feelings separated into positive and ambivalent feelings as had been expressed in the qualitative interviews, and also were seen to be different from

**Table 1E**  
**Factor Analysis: Feelings and Comfort**

<u>Item</u>	<u>Positive Feelings</u>	<u>Ambivalent Feelings</u>	<u>Comfort</u>
My hairstyle can make me feel good	.770		
When I get my hair styled it makes me happy	.590		
Having a great hairstyle is fun	.588		
Comments from friends about my hair affect the way I feel about myself		.619	
My hairstyle makes me feel attractive to the opposite sex		.608	
My hairstyle can make me feel unhappy		.605	
My hairstyle affects my mood		.550	
I get angry when I can't get my hair right		.529	
It bothers me when my stylist talks to others when working on my hair		.417	
I want to feel safe with my stylist			.832
I need to feel relaxed with my stylist			.658
It is important for me to feel in control when I am getting my hair cut			.390
I am apprehensive about trying a different stylist			dropped
Model fit: $P2 = 118.87$ , $df = 51$ , $std. RMR = 0.06$ , $NFI = 0.93$ , $CFI = 0.95$			

**Table 1F**  
**Factor Analysis: Salon and Cost**

<u>Item</u>	<u>Salon</u>	<u>Cost</u>
The cleanliness of the salon is important to me	.849	
The atmosphere of the salon is important to me	.800	
A convenient location for the salon is important to me		.680
I would switch my stylist if the price of the haircut went up		.763
The cost of the haircut is important to me		.761
I would not switch my stylist even if s/he charged a higher price than the competition		.748
Model fit: $P2 = 39.71$ , $df = 8$ , $std. RMR = 0.07$ , $NFI = 0.90$ , $CFI = 0.91$		

the comfort felt during the process. The only difference was that items related to salon atmosphere and cleanliness loaded on a single factor (labeled salon) and items related to cost and salon location also loaded on a single factor (labeled cost, as in monetary and non-monetary costs).

To further verify these factors, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using LISREL8 (Joreskog and Sorbom 1993) was conducted for each set, and the findings fully supported the factors in the exploratory factor analysis. The model fits for the

CFA are also shown in Tables 1A-F and all are acceptable or close to acceptable. It should be noted that items that loaded on two factors in the exploratory analysis were dropped for the CFA (see Tables). Also, when items with factor loadings lower than 0.55 were dropped, the model fits improve greatly. These results are not provided for space considerations, as it is more informative to show *all* the items used in the study. Further, the fact that the model fits are good with *all* the items included provides a more rigorous test of the factor structure. For future



reference in using the scales, the constructs should be measured using items with loadings greater than 0.55 for better results.

### T-Tests for Gender Differences

T-tests were conducted for the means of the fifteen factors by gender (see Table 2). The results indicate that speed and cost of service were more important to men and the rest of the factors were more important to women. Means for speed were 4.77 (for men) and 3.83 (for women), with  $t=5.79$ ,  $p<.0001$ . Means for cost were 4.67 (for men) and 4.19 (for women), with  $t=3.48$ ,  $p<.001$ . The means, t-values, and probabilities for the rest of the factors are shown in Table 2. All the t-tests were statistically significant.

The means were also examined to create rankings by gender, based on the mean values of the factors (see Table 2). An examination of the rankings showed that competence was ranked the highest by both men and women and that competence, verbal responsiveness, and appearance represented "the top three" category for both men and women. Comfort was fairly high for both groups, as were positive feelings. Rapport was more important than long-term relationship, and salon was moderately important for both groups. Ambivalent feelings, self-confidence and focus of attention were not that important to either group.

Comparing the rest of the rankings, differences in gender were assumed if ranking was different by gender by a score difference of 3 or more. Although not a statistical test, it gave us a method to further explore gender differences in evaluation. Six categories fit this rule. Speed was ranked 5<sup>th</sup> by men and 15<sup>th</sup> (lowest) by women, a huge difference of ten points. Similarly, cost was ranked 6<sup>th</sup> by men and 13<sup>th</sup> by women, a clear difference with seven points. These results support our t-tests as well as the qualitative analysis where men mentioned speed and cost (monetary as well as physical effort) as their criteria for evaluation.

Two other categories in Table 2 showed strong gender differences. Physical responsiveness was ranked 4<sup>th</sup> by women and 9<sup>th</sup> by men, a difference of five points, and pampering was ranked 11<sup>th</sup> by women and 15<sup>th</sup> (lowest) by men, a difference of

four points. Finally, two categories had gender differences of three points between rankings. Rapport was ranked 8<sup>th</sup> by women and 11<sup>th</sup> by men, and ambivalent feelings were ranked 9<sup>th</sup> by women and 12<sup>th</sup> by men. Again, these results support our t-tests and qualitative research, where all the factors other than speed and cost were more important to women.

However, the ranking test singles out physical responsiveness and pampering as factors much more important to women than to men, rapport and ambivalent feelings as somewhat more important to women than to men, and the rest of the factors as being somewhat similar to both groups. The factors that don't have much variance as per the ranking test include the top three factors (competence, verbal responsiveness, and appearance) as well as the bottom three factors (long-term relationship, self-confidence, and focus of attention). Thus, the ranking test adds to the findings of the t-tests that simply support gender differences for all the factors.

Next, t-tests were conducted to examine the switching factors identified in the pilot study and to determine gender differences for these (see Table 3). High mean values for three factors showed that both men and women identified a drop in competence of the stylist, a discontinuation of responsiveness from the stylist, and a lack of comfort with the stylist as strong reasons for switching. Low mean values for two factors showed that both men and women did not think that wanting a different hairstyle or the fact that they stopped getting compliments on their haircuts would be reasons for switching.

At the same time, there were some gender differences. The results indicate that men are more likely to switch stylists if they have to pay a higher price than the competition, if they have to wait frequently, if they moved across town, if the stylist or they relocated, or if their hair was difficult to fix. The first factor is not a surprise; it confirms earlier results that the price of haircuts is more important to men than to women. The next three, waiting frequently, moving across town, and relocating capture inconvenience and this finding confirms earlier results that men value convenience more than do women. We had expected that "hair is difficult to fix" would be related to appearance and would be more

**Table 2**  
**Gender Differences in Importance of Factors Related to Haircutting Experience**

FACTOR	RANKING		GENDER	SAMPLE SIZE	MEAN	T-VALUE	SIGNIFICANCE
	F	M					
Competence	1	1	Male	163	5.34	7.06	.0001
			Female	165	6.18		
Speed	15	5	Male	162	4.77	5.79	.0001
			Female	165	3.83		
Verbal Responsiveness	2	3	Male	157	5.14	7.73	.0001
			Female	163	6.04		
Physical Responsiveness	4	9	Male	163	4.38	7.82	.0001
			Female	164	5.80		
Pampering	11	15	Male	162	3.27	7.78	.0001
			Female	164	4.39		
Appearance	3	2	Male	160	5.32	5.47	.0001
			Female	155	5.91		
Positive Feelings	5	7	Male	162	4.59	8.74	.0001
			Female	163	5.74		
Ambivalent Feelings	9	12	Male	161	3.76	4.15	.0001
			Female	162	4.31		
Comfort	6	4	Male	162	4.89	6.09	.0001
			Female	164	5.65		
Rapport	8	11	Male	159	4.38	6.93	.0001
			Female	154	5.24		
Long Term Relationship	12	14	Male	160	3.45	6.04	.0001
			Female	164	4.28		
Self-Confidence	14	13	Male	160	3.59	3.12	.002
			Female	165	3.99		
Focus of attention	10	10	Male	160	4.09	5.97	.0001
			Female	162	4.88		
Salon	7	8	Male	162	4.58	7.69	.0001
			Female	165	5.55		
Cost	13	6	Male	158	4.67	3.48	.001
			Female	165	4.19		

important to women. However, "difficult to fix" appears to be yet another convenience factor related to physical effort and understandably is more important to men.

Women were more likely to switch stylists if they had one bad haircut, if they were no longer comfortable with the stylist, if the stylist stopped being responsive to them, and if the stylist no

longer pampered them. The emphasis on responsiveness and comfort is shared by men, but is stronger for women, as in the t-tests for evaluation. Women's preference for pampering ties in with the earlier qualitative study as well as the t-tests and rankings. The importance of just one bad haircut captures a number of themes. It ties into women's concern with competence,

**Table 3**  
**Gender Differences in Reasons for Switching Hair Stylist**

FACTOR	GENDER	SAMPLE SIZE	MEAN	T-VALUE	SIGNIFICANCE
One bad cut	Male	162	3.76	1.79	.07
	Female	165	4.09		
No longer comfortable	Male	161	4.83	3.16	.002
	Female	164	5.39		
Drop in competency	Male	163	5.01	0.85	N.S.
	Female	165	5.16		
Stylist moved to different salon	Male	162	3.51	0.78	N.S.
	Female	165	3.35		
I wanted different hairstyle	Male	162	2.75	1.65	N.S.
	Female	165	2.48		
No longer felt good	Male	162	3.77	1.18	N.S.
	Female	164	3.99		
Hair difficult to fix	Male	163	4.11	2.30	.02
	Female	165	3.71		
I moved across town	Male	162	4.56	3.17	.002
	Female	165	3.89		
Stylist or I relocated	Male	162	3.96	2.67	.008
	Female	165	3.45		
Stopped getting compliments	Male	162	2.70	0.02	N.S.
	Female	164	2.70		
No longer friends	Male	161	3.84	1.06	N.S.
	Female	164	4.06		
No longer pampered	Male	162	2.99	2.36	.02
	Female	165	3.39		
Stopped being responsive	Male	162	5.12	2.59	.01
	Female	165	5.59		
Have to wait frequently	Male	163	4.66	2.23	.03
	Female	165	4.23		
Higher price than competition	Male	161	4.48	5.11	.0001
	Female	165	3.42		

appearance, self-confidence, and focus of attention. Earlier results based on t-tests had shown that all of these factors are more important to women than to men.

Lastly, t-tests were conducted on the three trade-off statements (see Table 4). Results showed that women were more willing to pay a higher price if they felt good ( $t=3.35$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and that men were more likely to accept a less than perfect

haircut if the stylist was attentive ( $t=3.76$ ,  $p < .0001$ ). Both results are strong verifications of earlier results. Women are not as concerned about price and value as they are about feeling good, whereas men are very concerned about price. Women are very concerned about getting a perfect haircut; men are more willing to accept a less than perfect haircut if the stylist is attentive. Finally, both men and women seemed to think that a long-

**Table 4**  
**Gender Differences in Trade-offs Among Factors**

TRADE-OFF	GENDER	SAMPLE SIZE	MEAN	T-VALUE	SIGNIFICANCE
Higher price okay if I feel good	Male	161	4.22	3.35	.001
	Female	164	4.85		
Less than perfect haircut okay if stylist is attentive	Male	161	3.50	3.76	.0001
	Female	164	2.90		
Long-term relationship not necessary if stylist is competent	Male	161	4.83	0.18	N.S.
	Female	164	4.79		

term relationship with the stylist was not important if the stylist was competent. This finding also supports earlier results (see Table 2). Competence was ranked number one by both men and women whereas having a long-term relationship with the stylist was low priority for both groups with rankings of 11 (for women) and 13 (for men).

## DISCUSSION

### Contribution Based on Proposed Framework

A broad framework is proposed to simultaneously determine the effect of process, outcome, and extrinsic factors on service evaluation as well as switching behavior (see Figure 1). Past service evaluation studies (e.g., Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry 1988) have focused mainly on process factors. Recent studies on service evaluation (Johnson, Zinkan, and Ayala 1998; Powpaka 1996) have included outcome factors in addition to process factors. Other researchers (Mazursky, LaBarbera, and Aiello 1987) have suggested that the effect of extrinsic factors on switching behavior needs to be considered. However, no study has explicitly incorporated all three sets of factors, *process*, *outcome*, and *extrinsic*, in one framework, and further, no study has examined the effects of these factors on both *service evaluation* and *switching behavior*. The proposed framework is applicable to any experiential service and provides a comprehensive basis for investigating the factors underlying customers' evaluation of services and why they switch to competitors.

The framework also incorporates differences in

service evaluation and switching motivation for different customer groups based on their level of involvement with the service. Whereas it is important to know which factors are important to *all* customers, identification of factors important to different groups allows for better segmentation strategies. Depending on the context, customer involvement may be related to demographic, psychographic, or cultural factors, or even personality traits. Customer involvement with the service may be represented with appropriate surrogates for the context drawn from this set, or may be directly measured using involvement scales (Day, Stafford, and Camacho 1995; Zaichkowsky 1985). Irrespective of whether involvement is directly measured or represented by a surrogate factor, the framework allows an investigation of differences among groups of customers that have relevance for marketers.

The proposed framework was tested for a specific context (a hair salon). The results indicate the type of findings that can be obtained using this framework. First, the framework allowed us to determine which factors were important for service evaluation and identified gender similarities in evaluation. Competence, verbal responsiveness, and appearance were the most important factors to both men and women in a haircutting context. The first two are process factors and the third is an outcome factor showing that customers use a combination of process and outcome factors to determine top criteria for the evaluation of services. In further support of this finding, comfort (a process factor) was fairly high for both groups, as were positive feelings (an outcome factor). Finally, salon (an extrinsic factor) was

moderately important to both groups. Thus, using the framework helped identify a variety of process, outcome, and extrinsic factors relevant to *all* customers. Clearly, the implication to marketers is the need to focus on these factors for high service evaluation across the board.

The framework also allowed us to examine customer differences in service evaluation based on gender. (Gender was used as a surrogate for involvement with the haircutting experience, based on our qualitative study.) Speed (a process factor) and cost (an extrinsic factor) were more important to men for evaluation whereas physical responsiveness and pampering (both process factors) were more important to women. It is possible that women tend to focus more on process factors to the exclusion of extrinsic factors, whereas men may focus equally on process and extrinsic factors. Future research should investigate the relative importance of process, outcome, and extrinsic factors for service evaluation in a variety of service contexts as well as for different customer groups based on their involvement.

In her study on switching, Keaveney (1995) listed several factors as customers' reasons for switching services. For simple incidents, core service failure accounted for 24.6 percent of reasons for switching, failed service encounters accounted for 19.1 percent, and price and inconvenience together accounted for 29.9 percent. Applying our framework to Keaveney's study, we see that failed service encounters are related to service process, core service failures are related to service outcome, and price and inconvenience represent extrinsic factors. The fact that these categories together accounted for three-fourths of all reasons for switching in Keaveney's study is further rationale for applying our broad framework to capture relevant factors for switching (and to see how they differ from the factors important for evaluation).

As in the case of evaluation, our framework showed us which factors were important for switching and identified gender similarities. A drop in competence, responsiveness, or comfort (all process factors) were the most important reasons cited by both groups in terms of switching stylists. The first two factors were also in the most important category for service evaluation.

Comfort, however, had only been moderately important for service evaluation. Further, although two respondents in the qualitative study had mentioned that they would switch stylists if they wanted a new hairstyle or if they stopped getting compliments, the quantitative study showed that these factors were low on the priority list for both groups as criteria for switching.

The framework also allowed us to examine customer differences in switching based on gender. We found that price and convenience (both extrinsic factors) are more important to men than to women for switching stylists. Thus, even for switching (and not just for evaluation), extrinsic factors seem more important to men than to women. This finding supports Mazursky et al.'s (1987) observation that when consumers are motivated by extrinsic factors, they may switch providers despite high levels of process and outcome. Price was important to men both for switching and evaluation of the stylist, but "convenience" emerged only for switching. This factor included all types of inconveniences such as waiting frequently, moving across town, relocating, and finding that their hair was difficult to fix. Of these, only the first inconvenience (waiting frequently) is associated with time, as is speed (a process factor) that men did consider important for service evaluation.

Responsiveness, pampering, and comfort (all process factors) and "just one bad haircut" (an outcome factor) were more important to women than to men as reasons to switch stylists. The responsiveness and pampering factors were also more important for women's evaluation of the stylist than men's, but comfort and "one bad haircut" emerged as a gender difference only for switching. This finding leads to the interesting conclusion that whereas women use process factors for evaluation, they use at least one major outcome factor for switching stylists. So no matter how responsive the stylist is and how much the female customer is pampered, she may switch stylists given just one bad haircut.

Specific implications of this study for practitioners are to ensure that the stylists they hire are competent and verbally responsive above all else. Both men and women thought these were critical factors. The finding that both male and female customers value outcomes such as

appearance and positive feelings further implies that stylists should not let customers leave the salon until they sense that the customers are pleased with their appearance. In addition, salons can target men by promoting their speed, cost, and convenience and keep them as customers by continuing to provide these benefits. Women can be targeted and retained as customers with responsiveness and pampering by stylists as well as by building rapport and providing comfort. At the same time, salons and stylists should be aware that even one bad haircut can be a reason for women to switch service providers.

### Contribution Based on Research Methods

Another contribution of our study is the convergence of research methods. The critical results on the importance of factors for evaluation and switching and the gender differences were supported through a number of research approaches and tests. For the most part, our predictions based on the qualitative research matched our results from the quantitative study. The qualitative study suggested that men value the speed, cost, and convenience associated with a haircut more than do women. Men's emphasis on extrinsic factors was borne out in quantitative tests on gender differences for evaluation as well as for switching. Our qualitative study suggested that women value *all* other factors more than do men and our t-tests for evaluation bore this out as well. T-tests showed that women value *process* factors such as competence, verbal and physical responsiveness, pampering, comfort, and rapport more than do men. They also value *outcome* factors such as appearance, feelings, self-confidence, and focus of attention, and the *extrinsic* factor, salon (atmosphere and cleanliness), more than do men. The last factor, long-term relationship, which is related to rapport (but not really a process factor), is also valued more by women than by men.

At the same time, our rankings analysis showed that despite gender differences, some factors such as long-term relationships, ambivalent feelings, self-confidence, and focus of attention are not very important to men or women. It is not surprising that these factors are not important to men based on the qualitative research. However,

female respondents in the qualitative study had specifically mentioned all these factors as important for evaluation or switching. Perhaps, long-term relationships are more important to older segments which were included in the qualitative study but not in the quantitative study. Also, rapport was found to be more important than long-term relationships. Given that rapport sometimes comes about as a result of a long-term relationship and at other times takes place in a shorter time period, it is possible that when some respondents had mentioned long-term relationships, they may have been thinking of the rapport that often goes with this.

Our qualitative study had suggested that feelings associated with the haircutting experience would be an important outcome factor, especially for women. Although our quantitative study did find that women experienced feelings (positive and ambivalent) more than did men, only positive feelings as an outcome of the haircutting experience were found to be important to both men and women. The possibility of ambivalent feelings as an outcome were not important to either group for evaluation or switching. The empirical support for positive feelings (over ambivalent feelings) as an important outcome factor is in keeping with Hirschman and Holbrook's (1982) notion of the importance to consumers of "feeling good."

Two other factors, self-confidence and focus of attention, mentioned in the qualitative study, did not emerge as important in the quantitative study. Perhaps these factors (along with ambivalent feelings), are easier to capture in a critical incident format than in survey research. In any case, these findings again point to the benefit of conducting different types of analyses. On the one hand, the use of multiple research methods and analytical techniques can indicate the most critical factors as they will emerge in *all* the analyses. On the other hand, triangulation of research methods can help capture aspects which might seem less important when using only one type of research method.

Implications for future research are several. First, researchers can see if the *patterns* of process, outcome, and extrinsic factors for service evaluation and switching behavior found in this study hold for other experiential services. Second, our *multi-method approach* may be applied to other contexts to capture all possible factors and to

pinpoint critical ones. Third, researchers can apply our methodology to test for *customer differences (based on involvement)* in evaluation and switching behavior for other experiential services, and for services in general. Another avenue for future research is to extend the *trade-off analysis* we conducted. By investigating a whole series of trade-off options, researchers may be able to get at the heart of the reasons consumers have for switching service providers.

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