DOES CUSTOMER SATISFACTION PREDICT SHOPPER INTENTIONS?

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ABSTRACT

Facing difficult times, retailers are anxious to stimulate store visits and positive word-of-mouth. Unfortunately, most retailing studies regard satisfaction as the ultimate dependent variable and fail to examine post-purchase variables. The ones that do, focus on *dissatisfaction* and its effect on complaining behavior and negative word-of-mouth. This study investigates possible relationships between *satisfaction* and post-purchase intentions of shoppers. The authors define overall satisfaction as opposed to transactional satisfaction and further differentiate this from satisfaction in specific shopping situations. They examine the effects of both levels of satisfaction on patronage intentions and intentions to recommend the store to others. The results show that in some shopping situations, situational satisfaction has a direct influence on post-purchase intentions as well as an indirect effect mediated by overall satisfaction. In other shopping situations, situational satisfaction only has an indirect effect on post-purchase intentions or does not influence them at all. Overall satisfaction, however, has a strong positive influence on post-purchase intentions. These findings suggest that retailers should not simply focus on avoiding customer dissatisfaction; instead, they should be proactive in their efforts to create highly satisfied customers.

INTRODUCTION

For the past several years, retailers have faced problems as consumers have shown an increasing reluctance to spend (Hummel and Savitt 1988). Retail sales in 1991 dropped an estimated 1.5% over 1990 (Business Week 1991). Today, major national retailers, already heavily in debt, are experiencing substantial losses and are being forced to merge with or sell to other retail organizations, or, in many cases, to file for bankruptcy (Business Week 1992).

What exacerbates this situation is that consumers are becoming more sophisticated and have greater expectations related to their consumption experiences (Hummel and Savitt 1988; Smith 1989). Consequently, retailers must not only try to stimulate store visits but they must also differentiate themselves by satisfying customers better than the competition (Berry 1986; Westbrook 1981). The premise is that satisfied customers will return to the store and also engage in positive word-of-mouth communications about the store.

The positive relationship between customer satisfaction and repurchase intentions has been suggested in the literature and supported by empirical research (Bearden and Teel 1983; LaBarbera and Mazursky 1983; Oliver and Swan 1989). Although this relationship is supported in the retailing literature as well (Swan 1977; Swan and Trawick 1981), the empirical evidence is somewhat limited. Some researchers suggest that the relationship may not be as strong as the negative influence of dissatisfaction on patronage intentions (Bearden, Crockett, and Teel 1981; Swinyard and Whitlark 1992). Does this imply that retailers should focus entirely on reducing or avoiding dissatisfaction? Or, should they also aim at increasing overall satisfaction in order to encourage people to return to their stores?

With regard to word-of-mouth, negative communications have been found to be reduced by customer satisfaction (Bearden and Teel 1983) and increased by customer dissatisfaction (Richins 1983). Little empirical evidence exists regarding the relationship of satisfaction to positive word-of-mouth. Again, should retailers expend all their efforts on reducing negative word-of-mouth? Or, should they also aim at increasing overall satisfaction in order to encourage people to tell others about their stores?

The purpose of this study is to determine whether there is a positive relationship between customer satisfaction and post-purchase intentions-- specifically patronage intentions and intentions to recommend the store to others. These relationships are investigated both with respect to overall satisfaction and satisfaction in specific shopping situations.

BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES

Customer satisfaction is likely to increase the customer's resolution to buy the product more often and satisfied customers will be more likely to urge others to try the product (Day 1977). Extending the definition of "product" to include store, this suggests that customer satisfaction *should* be positively related to (1) repurchase (patronage) intentions and (2) positive word-of-mouth. However, most satisfaction research focuses on customer satisfaction as the ultimate dependent variable. Halstead (1989) recommends that satisfaction research include post-purchase variables such as intentions and word-of-mouth because the real value of measuring satisfaction is in predicting customer responses.

Satisfaction and Repurchase (Patronage) Intentions

Oliver (1980) found that a high level of consumer satisfaction increased the favorability of brand attitude, which in turn increased intention to repurchase the brand. Bearden and Teel (1983) also found that for customers of automobile services, satisfaction influenced patronage intentions indirectly, mediated by attitudes.

There is also considerable evidence of *direct* influence of customer satisfaction on repurchase intentions. A large scale study on consumer complaints found that a sizeable proportion of dissatisfied customers (30-90%) did not intend to repurchase the brand (Technical Assistance Research Programs [TARP] 1979). In a longitudinal study on grocery products, LaBarbera and Mazursky (1983) found that the influence of customer satisfaction on repurchase intention was fairly strong, but the importance of satisfaction in predicting repurchase behavior decreased with high brand loyalty. Oliver and Swan (1989) found a very strong influence of customer satisfaction on intentions to repurchase automobiles, while Halstead and Page (1992) found that satisfied customers had higher repurchase intentions than did dissatisfied customers.

Some empirical research on services has yielded the same direct relationship between customer satisfaction and patronage intentions. In a study on consumer perceptions of banking, fast food, and other services, Cronin and Taylor (1992) found that customer satisfaction strongly influenced patronage intentions. Woodside, Frey, and Daly (1989) found that hospital patients reported intentions to go back to the same hospital (should they need to) if they were satisfied with the care they received while at the hospital.

Much of the satisfaction research in retailing is with reference to a specific experience, where disconfirmation of expectations (rather than satisfaction) plays a major role in determining patronage intentions (Bearden, Crockett, and Teel 1981). Swinyard and Whitlark (1992) propose that consumer dissatisfaction is likely to have a greater influence on patronage intentions than consumer satisfaction. However, some empirical evidence does exist to support a strong relationship between satisfaction and patronage intentions. An early empirical study (Swan 1977) found that patronage intentions of department store customers were determined primarily by customer satisfaction. Similarly, a strong link between satisfaction and patronage intentions was found for customers of a restaurant (Swan and Trawick 1981). Thus, it is proposed that:

H1: Customer satisfaction with the store will have a positive influence on patronage intentions.

Satisfaction and Word-of-Mouth

Empirical evidence regarding the extent of negative versus positive word-of-mouth is somewhat mixed (Yi 1990). One study found that negative word-of-mouth is more likely to occur than positive word-of-mouth (TARP 1981). On the other hand, Holmes and Lett (1977) found that satisfied consumers participate in word-of-mouth communications to a greater extent than dissatisfied consumers. Richins (1983) found that negative word-of-mouth by dissatisfied consumers is more likely when the problem is severe and the retailer is unresponsive to complaints. Richins (1984) suggests that the extent of negative versus positive word-of-mouth depends on consumer commitment to the product (negative word-of-mouth increasing with greater product commitment).

In general, the focus of studies on word-of-

mouth has been negative communications spurred by dissatisfaction. Yet, a relevant research issue is the effect of *satisfaction* on word-of-mouth (both positive and negative). Bearden and Teel (1983) report that customer satisfaction resulted in reduced complaint activity, which was defined to include negative word-of-mouth. Valle and Wallendorf (1977) suggest that although satisfied customers are unlikely to report their experiences to store managers, they are likely to talk to friends about their positive experiences. Westbrook (1987) proposes that satisfaction has the most influence on word-of-mouth in its affective rather than cognitive state. Yi (1990) suggests that customer satisfaction is expected to be an important determinant of word-of-mouth. Defining intentions to engage in positive word-of-mouth as intentions to recommend to others, it is proposed that:

> H2: Customer satisfaction with the store will have a positive influence on intentions to recommend the store to others.

Customer Satisfaction in Different Situations

Most satisfaction surveys focus on measures of satisfaction for the last purchase transaction and do not measure *overall* satisfaction across experiences (Day and Wensley 1988). Yet, these transaction-specific measures are referred to as overall satisfaction or simply as customer satisfaction with that store/service/product. In this paper, overall customer satisfaction is conceptualized to form across several consumption or shopping experiences. The customer satisfaction construct in hypotheses H1 and H2, presented earlier, may be viewed as overall satisfaction with the store. Given that customers experience a variety of shopping situations in a given store (Belk 1974), we define a second construct called situational satisfaction. Situational satisfaction is experienced in relation to a type of shopping experience such as shopping in a hurry or shopping with family members and is also likely to impact post-purchase intentions.

Having conceptualized these two constructs, a research issue that arises is the relationship between them. While it is possible that overall satisfaction may color the customer's satisfaction with all shopping situations in that store, this would generally occur only in extreme cases (e.g., if the customer was absolutely delighted or terribly disappointed). A more logical sequence for most people would be that situational satisfaction would influence overall satisfaction because people would integrate what transpires across different situations into an overall sense of satisfaction.

Although there is a lack of research on situational satisfaction, the link from situational satisfaction to overall satisfaction can be viewed as an extension of existing literature. For example, Westbrook (1981) suggests that customer satisfaction with a store should be viewed as the result of an evaluation of the total set of experiences realized from patronizing that retailer. However, he is referring to experiences within a given transaction (e.g., finding the product one needs, getting good service, finding parking, etc.). Woodside, Frey, and Daly (1989) write that patient satisfaction with different aspects of a hospital's service such as nursing, food, technical service, and discharge, influences overall satisfaction with the hospital, which still refers to *one* experience at the hospital. The following proposition extends these ideas to a conceptualization of satisfaction in different shopping situations:

> H3: Situational customer satisfaction with the store will have a positive influence on overall customer satisfaction with the store.

At the same time, situational satisfaction may directly influence post-purchase intentions. Situational factors have been found to be important in studies on customer satisfaction, specifically in determining customer expectations (Cadotte, Woodruff, and Jenkins 1987). Mattson and Dubinsky (1987) report that situational factors such as time pressure and purpose of trip (self versus gift) influence store visit patterns. This suggests that situational satisfaction with the store may also have an effect on patronage intentions and intentions to recommend the store to others. Hence, hypotheses similar to H1 and H2 may be developed for customer satisfaction in different situations. However, given the lack of literature support, these hypotheses may be somewhat exploratory.

H4:   Situational satisfaction will have a positive influence on patronage intentions.

H5:   Situational satisfaction will have a positive influence on intentions to recommend the store to others.

Hypotheses H1, H2, and H3 are presented in Figure 1A and represent the indirect effects of situational customer satisfaction on post-purchase intentions mediated by overall customer satisfaction. Hypotheses H4 and H5 are presented in Figure 1B and represent direct effects of situational customer satisfaction on post-purchase intentions. By testing both models, the authors suggest that it is possible that situational satisfaction influences post-purchase intentions both indirectly (as in Figure 1A) and directly (as in Figure 1B).

Figure 1

A. Indirect Effects of Situational Satisfaction on Intentions
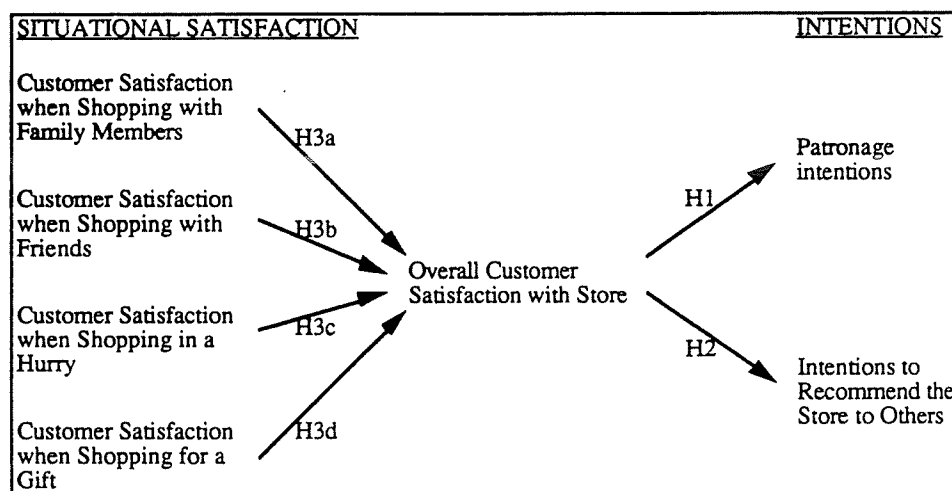
B. Direct Effects of Situational Satisfaction in Intentions
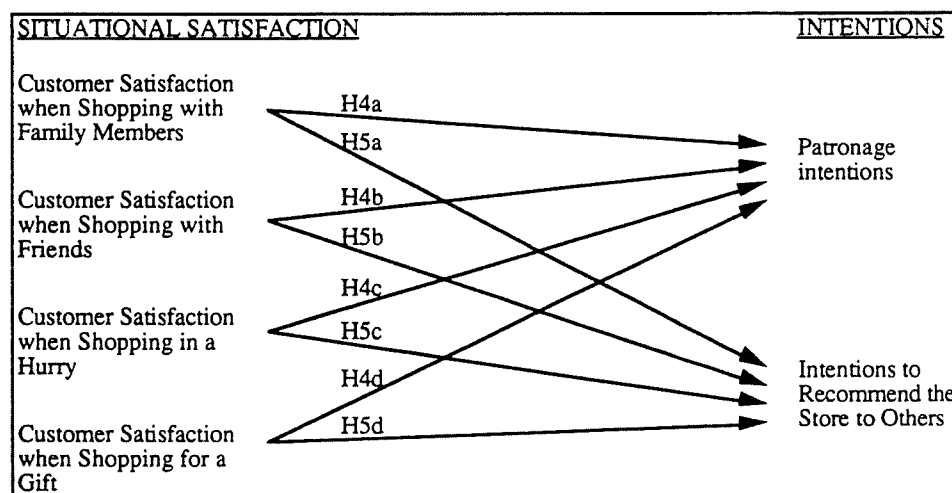
It is seen that hypotheses H3, H4, and H5 are further broken down into a, b, c, and d for each hypothesis based on common shopping situations described in the literature (Belk 1975; Mattson and Dubinsky 1987). Thus, hypotheses H3, H4, and H5 are tested separately for shopping with family members, shopping with friends, shopping in a hurry, and shopping for a gift. According to Belk's typology, the first two situations, shopping with family members or friends, represent different social surroundings. Shopping in a hurry represents a temporal perspective as well as an antecedent state. Shopping for a gift represents a task definition. The only category not represented is physical surroundings and this was excluded because store layout, lighting, and other physical aspects of the store would tend to remain relatively constant over various shopping experiences.

METHOD

Research Objectives

The major objective of this research is to test the effects of situational and overall satisfaction on post-purchase intentions as specified in hypotheses H1 - H5. In addition, exploratory analyses are conducted to explore the effect of shopping frequency, length of store patronage, gender, and age of customers on satisfaction and post-purchase intentions.

Sample and Procedure

A total of 224 customers of two southeastern department store chains were the respondents for this study. Seventy-two respondents were from one chain and 152 from the other. The sample consisted of 197 women and 27 men with a mean age of 42.77. The data were collected, using a self-administered questionnaire, at seven different stores (three from one chain and four from the other). All the stores used in the study were located in similar trading areas and had similar customer profiles.

Senior management personnel at each chain selected for the study agreed to participate in the research. College students majoring in retailing, as well as store employees, helped in data collection. Detailed instructions, a letter to the

store manager, and a supply of questionnaires were sent to each store. Follow-up telephone calls to each store manager and each questionnaire administrator were conducted to answer any questions or concerns before data collection began.

The data were collected during the same month at each of the stores. To ensure a diverse sample, respondents were selected from customers shopping during morning, afternoon, and evening hours on weekdays as well as weekends. Depending on the flow of customers, every fifth or tenth adult customer entering the store was requested to complete the questionnaire provided he/she had shopped previously at the store. The respondents were offered a chair in a quiet area near the entrance of the store, and were provided a clipboard and pen with the questionnaire. The response rate for one chain was approximately 40-50%, while the second chain had a response rate of 75-90%. The difference in these rates may reflect the fact that the locations included for the first chain are in malls where customers may be merely passing through the store on the way to their destination, while the locations for the second chain are anchor stores located in strip centers and are the destination of shoppers who enter the store.

Measurement

Patronage intentions (i.e., intentions to shop at the store in the future) and intentions to recommend the store to others (i.e., intentions to engage in positive word-of-mouth about the store) were *each* measured using three items. Two of these were seven-point semantic differential items (likely/unlikely, possible/impossible) (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975) and one was a five-point intention item (definitely would/definitely would not) commonly used in consumer research.

Overall customer satisfaction was measured using five items. The first three items were seven-point semantic differential scales that followed a statement comparing the store to the customer's ideal store. The end-points for these items were pleased/displeased with the service, happy/unhappy with the store, and completely satisfied/dissatisfied (cf. Hausknecht 1990; Westbrook and Oliver 1981). A fourth item using seven faces registering progressive states of emotion (cf. Churchill and Surprenant 1982;

Westbrook and Oliver 1981) and a fifth item using the delighted/terrible scale (cf. Andrews and Withey 1976; Westbrook 1980) were also used to measure overall customer satisfaction.

Four types of situational satisfaction were measured based on four commonly experienced shopping situations: shopping with family members, shopping with friends, shopping in a hurry, and shopping for a gift. In each case, situational customer satisfaction was measured using two seven-point semantic differential items -- the faces scale (cf. Churchill and Surprenant 1982; Westbrook and Oliver 1981) and the delighted/terrible scale (cf. Andrews and Withey 1976; Westbrook 1980).

RESULTS

The reliabilities of the scales were computed and the results are presented in Table 1. Overall

Table 1
Reliability of Scales

Scale	# Items	Cronbach's alpha
Patronage intentions	3	0.90
Intentions to recommend	3	0.93
Overall customer satisfaction	5	0.91

Situational customer satisfaction:

		(Correlation)[*]
Shopping with family members	2	0.81
Shopping with friends	2	0.77
Shopping in a hurry	2	0.73
Shopping for a gift	2	0.62

[*] two items in scale

Table 2
Mediated Regression Analysis

Dependent Variable:	F	adjusted R^2	Independent Variables: Situational Customer Satisfaction Family a	Friends b	Hurry c	Gift d	Mediating Variable: Overall Customer Satisfaction
H1: Patronage intentions	143.88 (.0001)	0.39	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0.49 (.0001)
H2: Intentions to recommend	134.88 (.0001)	0.37	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0.54 (.0001)
H3: Overall customer satisfaction	85.40 (.0001)	0.60	0.15 (.05)	n.s.	0.22 (.001)	0.47 (.0001)	N/A
H4: Patronage intentions	35.31 (.0001)	0.38	0.17 (.05)	n.s.	n.s.	0.34 (.0001)	N/A
H5: Intentions to recommend	48.30 (.0001)	0.46	0.25 (.001)	n.s.	n.s.	0.34 (.0001)	N/A
Test of Mediation: Patronage intentions	34.74 (.0001)	0.43	0.12 (.05)	n.s.	n.s.	0.21 (.01)	0.28 (.0001)
Test of Mediation: Intentions to recommend	42.22 (.0001)	0.48	0.21 (.01)	n.s.	n.s.	0.24 (.01)	0.21 (.01)

customer satisfaction and the two intention scales had very high reliabilities. The situational satisfaction scales had only two items each; hence, reliabilities for these scales are represented by correlations instead of Cronbach's alpha. Thereliabilities for these scales also appear to be in an acceptable range (cf. Nunnally 1978), especially because scale adaptation for the new constructs represents a form of scale development.

Mediated regression analysis (cf. Baron and Kenny 1986) was conducted to test hypotheses H1 - H5 (see Table 2). Hypotheses H1 and H2 were supported at p < .0001, indicating that overall customer satisfaction had a positive influence on patronage intentions and on intentions to recommend the store to others. The effect sizes and the values of R^2 indicate that these effects are of practical significance as well. The regressions were re-run with the store as a dummy variable but it was not significant, thus suggesting that pooling information from two chain stores did not introduce unwanted variation into the sample.

Hypotheses H3, H4, and H5 were also supported at p < .0001, indicating that situational customer satisfaction had a positive influence on overall customer satisfaction, patronage intentions, and intentions to recommend the store to others. Finally, the tests of mediation were supported at p < .0001 and a comparison of the parameter estimates with those in hypotheses H4 and H5 (see Table 2) showed that overall satisfaction did mediate the effect of situational satisfaction, but not completely.

Breaking down the general hypotheses, it is seen that H3a, H3c, H3d, H4a, H4d, H5a, and H5d were supported and the remaining hypotheses were not (see columns a, b, c, and d, Table 2). Specifically, customer satisfaction when shopping with family members and customer satisfaction when shopping for a gift had positive influences on patronage intentions and intentions to recommend the store to others, which were partially mediated by overall customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction when shopping in a hurry had a positive influence on overall customer satisfaction, but did not directly influence intentions. Finally, customer satisfaction when shopping with friends had no effect on any dependent variable.

Some Exploratory Analyses

Some exploratory analyses were conducted based on the following rationale. Individuals who shop more frequently at a given store are likely to have higher levels of satisfaction and stronger post-purchase intentions than those who shop less frequently at the store. Similarly, long-time patrons are likely to have higher satisfaction and intentions than recent patrons. If this is so, it would be interesting to explore which situations are more important to frequent customers and long-time patrons.

The sample was divided by frequency and then by patronage. The low frequency group (n=85) consisted of customers who shop at the store at most twice a month. The high frequency group (n=80) consisted of customers who shop at the store at least four times a month. (Fifty-nine customers who shop at the store about three times a month were excluded from these high/low frequency groups). The low patronage group (n=54) consisted of customers who had shopped at the store for less than a year. The high patronage group (n=145) consisted of customers who had shopped at the store for two years or more. (Twenty-five customers who had shopped at the store for between one and two years were excluded from these high/low patronage groups.)

T-tests were conducted to determine whether there are differences in satisfaction and intentions by shopper frequency and patronage. The differences that were significant at p < .05 are presented in Table 3. These tests showed that frequent customers had higher patronage intentions as well as higher intentions to recommend the store to others than did infrequent customers. They also experienced greater overall satisfaction and were more satisfied when shopping with friends or for a gift. Customers who were long-time patrons had higher patronage intentions but lower satisfaction when shopping with friends than did new customers. Further exploratory analysis showed that women experienced greater satisfaction when shopping with family members or friends than did men and that the customer's age had no effect on satisfaction or intentions.

Having found that satisfaction and intentions *were* more important to frequent customers and long-time patrons than to infrequent customers and

recent patrons, further analyses were conducted to determine situations important to these groups. The test for hypothesis H3 (effect of situational customer satisfaction on overall customer satisfaction) was repeated to investigate differences by shopper frequency and length of patronage. The results showed that customer satisfaction when shopping for a gift had a positive influence on overall customer satisfaction irrespective of shopping frequency and length of patronage. In addition, for frequent shoppers and long-time patrons, customer satisfaction when shopping in a hurry had a positive influence on overall customer satisfaction. Finally, for relatively new customers, satisfaction when shopping with friends influenced overall customer satisfaction.

Table 3
T-Tests by Frequency, Patronage, and Gender

	Means		F	p
	Low frequency	High frequency		
Patronage intentions	5.61	6.00	2.18	.01
Intentions to recommend	5.42	5.91	1.85	.05
Overall customer satisfaction	6.06	6.48	2.23	.01
Satisfaction (shopping w. friends)	5.99	6.40	1.98	.05
Satisfaction (shopping for a gift)	6.04	6.44	2.10	.01
	Low patronage	High patronage		
Patronage intentions	5.79	5.93	2.22	.001
Satisfaction (shopping w. friends)	6.43	5.99	2.74	.0001
	Men	Women		
Satisfaction (shopping w. family)	5.95	6.12	2.20	.01
Satisfaction (shopping w. friends)	5.81	6.22	2.76	.001

DISCUSSION

Literature on customer satisfaction tends to conceptualize satisfaction at the transactional level. As a logical extension of past research (Westbrook 1981; Woodside, Frey and Daly 1989), this study introduces two constructs, situational customer satisfaction and overall customer satisfaction, and adapts standard satisfaction measures for these constructs. These constructs are useful in determining the influence of various levels of satisfaction on post-purchase intentions. The adapted scales are found to be reliable and may be used in future studies on overall and situational satisfaction.

Most retailing studies regard satisfaction as the ultimate dependent variable and fail to examine post-purchase variables (Oliver 1981; Westbrook 1981). The ones that do, focus on dissatisfaction and establish that it leads to complaining behavior and negative word-of mouth (Richins 1983; TARP 1981). The retailing literature contains limited empirical evidence supporting links between satisfaction and post-purchase intentions (Swan 1977; Swan and Trawick 1981). To fill this gap in the literature and to address issues of concern to retailers, this study hypothesized and tested direct influences of situational satisfaction on post-purchase intentions, as well as indirect influences mediated by overall satisfaction with the store.

The study found a strong, positive relationship between overall satisfaction and post-purchase intentions. Thus, retailers should not simply focus on reducing or avoiding dissatisfaction among their customers; instead, they should make an all-out effort to create highly satisfied customers. In other words, while it is important to ensure that customers do not develop negative feelings about the store, this strategy does not guarantee that customers will feel positive about the store; they may merely regard it in a neutral manner. A concentrated effort to develop satisfied customers is more likely to lead to higher patronage intentions and intentions to recommend the store to others.

Customer satisfaction when shopping with family members or for a gift had direct positive influences on post-purchase intentions as well as indirect effects mediated by overall satisfaction. Thus, these two shopping situations appear to be important determinants of patronage and word-of-mouth intentions for shoppers of department stores. In particular, satisfaction when shopping for a gift was important to all customers irrespective of shopping frequency or length of

patronage.

These results suggest that department stores should make an effort to ensure that their store is conducive to shopping with family members as well as for gift-shopping. To create better shopping environments for families, department stores might provide convenient and clean restrooms, in-store restaurants, and areas where children can amuse themselves while parents shop (Newsweek 1990). To make the store a better place for gift selection, these retail establishments might consider adding a gift department with a wide assortment of gifts, greeting cards to accompany gifts, as well as a gift-wrap service.

The study also found that satisfaction when shopping in a hurry was an important factor in determining overall satisfaction with the store, for both frequent customers and long-time patrons. Both groups are vital to retailers' success, not only because they are frequent customers and long-time patrons, but also because this study found that they have higher post-purchase intentions than infrequent or new customers. Therefore, department stores would benefit from improving store layout, customer service, and check out procedures so that whenever these customers are in a hurry, they can shop quickly and efficiently.

Satisfaction when shopping with friends was an important factor in determining overall satisfaction for new customers. There may be a logical explanation for this finding. The unfamiliar shopping environment may make it important to be with friends, and in order to become comfortable about the store, these first visits need to be satisfying. Some of the store improvements made to create a better shopping environment for families (e.g., clean and accessible restrooms, in-store restaurants) may also be attractive for people shopping with friends. Thus, department stores have a greater stake in making such improvements.

Retailers have the opportunity to increase satisfaction of customers in different shopping situations by "packaging" a set of services to better meet the needs of different customers. The needs could be identified by sensitizing sales associates to the special shopping circumstances that are critical to customer satisfaction (e.g., shopping with family or friends, shopping in a hurry, gift-shopping). As customers enter the store, their

specific shopping situation could be identified by a "greeter" trained to point out the services in the store that will address their specific needs (e.g., express check out for those in a hurry, in-store play area to accommodate families with children). A prominent sign near the store entrance could inform customers about other services, such as the gift department and restaurant. Direct mail may also be used to inform present and potential customers about store services that make specific shopping situations more satisfactory. The shopping situations that are most important to a given set of customers in determining overall satisfaction or post-purchase intentions may be emphasized in such promotions.

The research methodology used in this study has several advantages over past retailing studies on satisfaction. The study used actual customers who had shopped in that particular store before and who had formed some type of overall cognitions and/or affect about that store. In contrast, several retailing studies have measured customer evaluations of department store chains (Cronin and Taylor 1992) or store types (Finn and Lamb 1991) instead of specific stores. Moreover, by questioning them in the retail environment itself, the customers were likely to be more acutely aware of their shopping experiences in general and likely to focus on factors important to them. Past studies questioned participants at home (Cronin and Taylor 1992; Westbrook 1981). Finally, by having them respond to the questionnaire before that particular shopping experience, the study was more likely to obtain measures of satisfaction that were not transaction-specific.

Certain limitations in this study are acknowledged. Because the survey did not include truly dissatisfied customers, the sample is skewed. The respondents were not screened to determine whether they had experienced each shopping situation at that store. It was assumed that the situations included are fairly common types of shopping experiences and respondents were instructed to answer only relevant questions. Some multicollinearity among independent variables is likely. Further, as satisfaction and intentions are measured in the same study, their correspondence may be exaggerated due to common response bias. Finally, although the study takes a step in the right direction in

measuring behavioral intentions, the relationship between intentions and actual future behavior is not known.

The design and results of this study suggest several directions for future research. Other types of shopping situations, such as shopping alone or shopping in crowded conditions could be explored. The effect of situational satisfaction could be investigated for retail services such as banking and restaurants. Antecedents of customer satisfaction could be introduced (such as easy parking, good service, etc.) for each situation, to build it into a comprehensive satisfaction model that explains the causes *and* effects of satisfaction. Longitudinal studies could determine whether store policies result in changes in situational satisfaction. Overall satisfaction could be broadened to include overall dissatisfaction and the models could incorporate other post-purchase variables such as intentions to engage in complaint behavior. Finally, qualitative research could be conducted to get a better understanding of what happens during shopping experiences associated with a given situation (e.g., shopping with family members), and how this leads to (dis)satisfaction associated with a given situation over time.

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