BEHAVIORAL INTENTIONS IN SATISFACTION RESEARCH REVISITED

Magnus Söderlund, Stockholm School of Economics
Niclas Öhman, Stockholm School of Economics

ABSTRACT

Intentions are usually included as dependent variables in satisfaction models, but satisfaction researchers have paid little attention to the discussion in psychology and philosophy in which different intention constructs are distinguished. In this paper, we examine – empirically and conceptually – the satisfaction–intention link with respect to three different intention constructs. The main result is that satisfaction is not equally correlated with these three intentions, and it suggests that satisfaction researchers should be concerned with the particular intention constructs they use: the selection of one particular intention indicator over another will generate different conclusions about the role of satisfaction as a determinant of intentions. Since behavioral data are seldom collected by satisfaction researchers (intentions are often used as a proxy for behavior), different conclusions about the satisfaction-intention link are also likely to affect conclusions about customer behavior.

INTRODUCTION

Despite a frequently made assumption that customer satisfaction is affecting customer behavior, empirical studies of satisfaction's consequences seldom include data on behavioral outcomes. Instead, focus is on behavioral intentions. Repatronizing intentions, repurchasing intentions, and word-of-mouth intentions are examples of intentions often appearing as dependent variables in satisfaction research. There are reasons, however, to believe that satisfaction researchers have not paid enough attention to intentions. One particular deficiency is dealt with in this paper: satisfaction researchers have ignored the existence of different theoretical intention constructs. Yet scholars outside the field of customer satisfaction show that different types of intentions are not always strongly correlated with each other (Sheeran and Orbell, 1998) and that they produce different strength in associations with other variables (Fishbein and Stasson, 1990; Netemeyer and Burton, 1990; Norman and Smith, 1995; Sheppard et al, 1988; Warshaw and Davis, 1985). Moreover, at a conceptual level, scholars in psychology (e.g., Sheppard et al, 1988; Warshaw and Davis, 1985) and philosophy (e.g., Audi, 1973; Kenny, 1966) argue that several different intention constructs exist. To date, satisfaction research has not been informed by this development, since satisfaction researchers seem to merely select one particular operationalization of intentions without much explicit consideration.

Attention to different intention constructs, however, has not been completely absent from satisfaction research; Söderlund (2002, 2003) shows that satisfaction is affecting different intention constructs with unequal strength. Basically, Söderlund (2002) examined one specific satisfaction construct (current satisfaction with an object) and its impact on three different intention constructs, and Söderlund (2003) examined two satisfaction constructs (current satisfaction with an object and anticipated satisfaction with an object) and their effects on two intention constructs. The present paper should be seen as an attempt to replicate and extend this research. First, the present approach involves a different stimulus sampling method than those used by Söderlund (2002, 2003); in those two cases, all respondents were customers to the same firm, an airline, but in the present case several different firms served as stimulus objects. Second, neither Söderlund (2002) nor Söderlund (2003) used an act-oriented satisfaction construct, but it is included here. The main reason is that research on evaluations, particularly attitude research (cf. Ajzen and Madden, 1986), suggests that evaluations of an act are particularly useful in predicting intentions (to carry out an act) compared to evaluations of objects. Third, in relation to Söderlund (2002) and Söderlund

(2003), a different explanation of why satisfaction is not equally correlated with different intention constructs is explored in the present paper.

The study, then, is based on the assumption that the strength of the satisfaction–intention correlation is different for different types of intentions, and our purpose is to examine the assumption in conceptual and empirical terms. This examination, we believe, has important implications for both academicians and practitioners, particularly for those who equate intentions with customer loyalty – if different intention constructs result in different strength in the satisfaction–intention link, the mere selection of one intention indicator over another will generate different conclusions about the role of satisfaction as a determinant of loyalty.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework comprises three parts. First, we begin by introducing what we argue are three different intention constructs. Second, we present evidence that suggests that the strength of the link between (1) an evaluative judgment (such as a general attitude or a satisfaction judgment) and (2) an intention is contingent on the level of correspondence between the two constructs. Moreover, we introduce one particular correspondence element, sense of ownership, that we believe will contribute to an examination of the satisfaction-intention association. Third, we argue that satisfaction and the three intention constructs are located at different positions on a sense of ownership continuum, and that this is likely to produce different levels of association between satisfaction and the three intention constructs.

Intentions: Connections with the Future

An intention materializes when an individual makes a proposition that connects himself/herself with a future behavioral act. Generally, a proposition of this type has the form "I – connection – future act", and it is usually conceived of as evaluation-free (this distinguishes an intention from, for example, an attitude). Moreover, we view intentions as basic units in a network of propositions that emerge when individuals engage in future-oriented cognitive activities such as mental simulation, planning, imagination, and ruminations (a network of this type also includes the individual's perceptions of other people's intentions). The conceptual boundaries between these cognitive activities are far from clear, but they seem to share one basic function: they are windows on the future that help people perform tasks efficiently. Consequently, and with respect to intentions, we expect that they are continuously made with regard to many different acts. This is reflected in the marketing literature; propositions about the future which are explicitly labeled intentions by marketing scholars cover several acts in the marketplace. Search for product information, purchasing a product for the first time, repurchases, word-of-mouth, complaints, and contributing money are some examples. As already indicated, however, satisfaction researchers (and many other marketing scholars) do not distinguish between different intention *constructs*. Yet an individual may connect himself/herself with his/her future behavior in different ways. In the following, three such ways are examined. They share one characteristic: each construct has been explicitly referred to as intention in the literature.

Intentions-as-expectations (IE). One frequently used intention construct is *behavioral expectations*. It refers to the individual's assessment of the subjective probability that he or she will perform a particular behavior in the future. Typically, this is measured with questionnaire items such as "The likelihood that I would do A is...", "The probability that I will do B is...", "Rate the probability that you will do C", and "How likely are you to do D?"; the respondent is thus asked to estimate the probability that he or she will perform the act (cf. Gruber, 1970; Juster, 1966). This is perhaps the reason why behavioral expectations are sometimes labeled self-predictions (cf. Courneya and McAuley, 1993; Fishbein and Stasson, 1990, Gollwitzer, 1993). We refer to intention of this type as intentions-as-expectations (IE). In satisfaction-related research,

IE seems to be the most popular of the three constructs discussed in this section. It appears, for example, in Brady et al (2002), Cronin et al (2000), Danaher and Haddrell (1996), Gotlieb et al (1994), LaBarbera and Mazursky (1983), Lemon et al (2002), Mittal et al (1999), Mittal and Kamakura (2001), Oliver (1980), Oliver et al (1997), Patterson et al (1997), and Patterson and Spreng (1997).

Intentions-as-plans (IP). Another intention construct comes perhaps closer to the everyday notion of intention. It refers to the individual's *planned choice* to carry out a particular behavior in the future. An intention in this sense involves choosing or deciding to carry out the act (Conner et al, 1999; Malle and Knobe, 1997). It has also been argued that such intentions capture motivational factors that influence behavior; "they are indicators of how hard people are willing to try, of how much effort they are planning to exert, in order to perform the behavior" (Ajzen 1991, p. 181). Similarly, Bandura (1986) views intentions as "the determination to perform certain activities or to bring about a certain future state of affairs", and Howard (1989, p. 35) stresses "plan" in his intention definition. In typical applications, measurement items are "I am planning to...", "I intend to...", "Do you intend to...", "I will choose...", "I am going to choose...", and "I will select..." Here, we refer to intention of this type as intentions-as-plans (IP). Examples of satisfaction researchers who have used intention in this sense are Mittal et al (1998) and Taylor and Baker (1994). It can be noted that IP represent a potentially more homogenous group of intentions than IE and IW (cf. below), in the sense that an individual may not view his/her propositions about intending, choosing, selecting and planning as identical. However, since a clear typology in this area is yet to be developed, we will subsume them under the same general label (i.e., intentions-as-plans) in the present paper.

Intentions-as-wants (IW). An additional intention construct is a conceptualization in terms of *wants*. It has been referred to as an intention construct by Fishbein and Stasson (1990) and Norman and Smith (1995). This construct is found in several formal models of intentionality and in the "folk concept" of intentionality (Malle and Knobe, 1997). And, wants also appear in Heider (1958) who stresses that intention is often taken as the equivalent of wish or wanting. Moreover, wants closely resembles Gollwitzer's (1993) notion of goal intentions that specify a desired end state. Measures of this type of connection with the future usually take the form of Likert-type statements such as "I want to..." In the present paper, we label them intentions-as-wants (IW). It can be noted that in relation to IE and IP, IW is the least frequently used intention construct in marketing research. And, in some models in which it does appear, either as wants or in terms of a similar construct, desires, it is conceived of as an antecedent to intention, not an intention construct per se. For example, Perugini and Bagozzi (2001) argue that desires provide the motivational impetus for intentions (in their case, and with our terminology: intentions-as-plans) and thus that desires represent an independent variable that affects intentions (a similar argument appears in Bagozzi and Edwards, 1998). Nevertheless, and given that wants serve to connect the individual with his/her future acts, we refer to them as an intention construct in this paper.

Effects of Evaluations on Intentions

Thus, so far three types of intentions have been identified, and in the following sections we examine the potential of satisfaction for affecting them with unequal strength. In order to make contact with previous research (basically attitude research) in which it is shown that an evaluation (of an act) is unequally correlated with different types of intentions to carry out this act, we are assuming here that satisfaction is one particular type of evaluation. The general evaluative nature of the satisfaction construct is stressed by, for example, Anderson and Sullivan (1990), Garbarino and Johnson (1999), and Hunt (1977). Moreover, several authors suggest that satisfaction is an emotional response (Babin and Griffin, 1998; Gotlieb et al, 1994; Hausknecht, 1990), and, given that emotions can take on values ranging from

feeling bad to feeling good, emotions and thus satisfaction represent evaluations. We argue, then, that satisfaction shares an evaluative component with the traditional attitude construct. If satisfaction *is* an attitude, or a particular type of attitude, however, remains unclear, even though authors have referred to satisfaction as an "attitude-like judgment" (Fournier and Mick, 1999) and "similar to attitude" (Churchill and Surprenant, 1982). Yet for our purposes here, we deal with both attitudes and satisfaction as subjective evaluations.

Previous Research. Only a handful of studies have examined the potential for differences in the attitude–intention associations' strength given different intention constructs – but the studies that indeed deal with this topic generally indicate that differences exist. For example, it has been shown that attitudes are more strongly associated with IW than with IE (Fishbein and Stasson, 1990; Norman and Smith, 1995). Furthermore, Sheppard et al (1988) and Netemeyer and Burton (1990) found that attitudes were better predictors of IP than of IE. Given that satisfaction is one specific type of evaluation, this pattern suggests that we would expect the satisfaction–intention association to become increasingly stronger as we move from IE to IP and then further on to IW. This is also what Söderlund (2002) and Söderlund (2003) found in his exploratory studies of the satisfaction–intentions link. Why, then, do such differences exist? In the following, we will pursue an explanation attempt with the notion of correspondence as the point of departure. First, we briefly restate the importance of correspondence for obtaining strong associations between variables in the attitude–intention–behavior chain. Second, we extend this line of reasoning with a correspondence element – sense of ownership – that we believe has been overlooked in traditional views of correspondence.

The Importance of Correspondence. Basically, it is argued that the level of correspondence between the predictor and the criterion variable (e.g., an attitude and an intention) must be high if strong correlations are to materialize. It has also been argued that there are four elements that define any predictor and criterion – target, action, context, and time – and that a high level of correspondence (and thus a high empirical correlation) requires equivalence in all four elements (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1977; Fishbein and Middlestadt, 1995). Some empirical studies – in which the researchers have allowed for variation in correspondence in terms of target, action, context, or time – show that correspondence in those terms does indeed affect the ability of the predictor variable to be related to the criterion variable (cf. Conner et al, 1999).

Several authors have applied an implicit correspondence perspective – in terms of *other* elements than target, action, context, and time – on the strength of associations between selected entities in the attitude–intention–behavior chain. Examples of such elements, particularly with respect to the link between intentions and behavior, are degree of formation (Bagozzi and Yi, 1989) and volition (Sheppard et al, 1988). For example, it has been shown that IE perform better than IP in predicting behavior, and Sheppard et al (1988) argue that one reason is that behavior is often affected by uncontrollable factors that IE take account for better than IP (since IE allow more room for low-volition factors than IP).

Sense of Ownership. In an attempt to offer fuel for more research on correspondence elements, we propose an extension of the list of elements by building the present explanation on *sense of ownership* (which we believe will capture additional aspects compared to degree of formation and volition). This variable, sometimes referred to as psychological ownership, is derived from research on ownership and possessions. In this research tradition, it is observed that (a) ownership is a subjective variable, (b) ownership is a continuum rather than a dichotomy, and (c) subjects do not only perceive that they own physical possessions, but also mental entities such as beliefs, ideas, attitudes, memories, and emotions (cf. Abelson, 1986; Dittmar, 1991; Pierce et al, 1991; Pierce et al, 2001; Rudmin and Berry, 1987; Rudmin, 1994a; Rudmin, 1994b). Our main premise here is informed by this

research tradition, in the sense that we argue that differences in sense of ownership with respect to satisfaction and the three intention constructs can explain why satisfaction is not equally strongly associated with the intention constructs. It is the content of this premise that we turn to in the following.

Satisfaction and its Link to the Three Intention Constructs

With regard to satisfaction, we make two assumptions. First, satisfaction refers to an evaluative judgment made by customers who have personal experience with an object. That is to say, in order to arrive at a satisfaction judgment, the customer must have *consumed* the product in question. This means that the satisfaction judgment is likely to occupy a special place in the customer's mind compared to evaluations of products that the customer has heard about through such channels as word-of-mouth, advertising, and newspaper articles, but not yet consumed. This assumption is consistent with the view that the customer's personal experience represents a particularly salient base for judgments (Hoch and Deighton, 1989). Second, satisfaction has an emotional content (Babin and Griffin, 1998; Gotlieb et al, 1994; Hausknecht, 1990). Indeed, some authors argue that satisfaction *is* one among several emotions (Bagozzi et al, 1999). As such, it is characterized by partiality; it expresses a personal perspective (Ben-Ze'ev, 2000). Another emotion characteristic is its tendency to be associated with physiological reactions (Ben-Ze'ev, 2000). This makes an emotion qualitatively different from, say, the judgment that one brand has higher quality than another and the belief that one particular car is blue and not yellow, in the sense that the emotional state is likely to have a higher level of self-association. Therefore, we expect that an emotional state is not only "own" (i.e., subjective) but also "owned" (i.e., perceived to be possessed). In other words, *my* satisfaction, derived from *my* personal experience, and real to me, can be "mine" in the same sense that my car or my clothes are mine. In fact, we believe that *my* satisfaction, thus something referencing an event that has indeed taken place, is likely to produce a higher sense of ownership than any type of intention (since all intention types, by definition, reference a future event that is yet to take place). The consequence, we believe, can be seen in all existing empirical examinations of the satisfaction–intention link, in the sense that satisfaction is never explaining all variation in the selected intention measure. Nevertheless, we assume that the three different theoretical intention constructs introduced above are subject to *variation* in sense of ownership. In order to explore this assumption, we use a model developed by Pierce et al (2001). This model contains three main factors that determine the of sense of ownership of an object (control of the object, intimate knowledge of the object, and self-investment in the object), and it is assumed that the higher the scores on each of these three factors for one particular object, the stronger the individual perceives that s/he owns the object. Of these three determinants of sense of ownership, control is perhaps the most widely discussed to date (cf. Belk, 1988; Furby, 1978).

Consider, then, the case of IE. The individual who is forming IE judgments (e.g., "How *likely* am I to return to the Hilton hotel in Porto for my next vacation?") needs to take into account a variety of factors beyond himself/herself. For example, in a vacation context, and if the individual is considering spending his/her vacation with the family, s/he needs to assess the likelihood that family members want to go back to the same hotel. This individual must also estimate the chances of obtaining a room at the hotel given that many other people, who s/he does not know, and whose plans are even less known, desire to stay at the same hotel. The IE judgment, then, involves substantial attention to external factors that are likely to be uncontrollable, and we believe that this results in a perception that the IE judgment is associated with a relatively low level of control. Given many external factors to take into account, we also expect that a relatively low level of knowledge is involved in the IE judgment. And again given many external factors, we expect that the IE judgment is associated with a relatively low level of self-investment. Interestingly, in

Rudmin's (1994a) open-ended attempt to identify, in empirical terms, what people believe that they own, estimations of probabilities regarding future behavior did not surface at all as a possession.

With regard to IP, the judgment task becomes slightly different. In forming such judgments (e.g., "To what extent do I *plan* to return to the Hilton hotel in Porto for my next vacation?"), focus is transferred to factors that affect the individual's conscious choice. Several of the factors from the IE task, including external factors, such as other persons' wills, are likely to remain in the assessment. But we expect that at least some of those factors are eliminated – and that more room is allowed for self-related factors. For example, when I assess the extent to which I plan to do X, I am likely to look relatively less closely at my non-cognitive habits and the uncontrollable parts of my environment – and more at "myself". This view is consistent with, for example, Azjen's (1991, p. 181) notion of intentions-as-plans; they are "indicators of how hard people are willing to try, of how much effort they are planning to exert, in order to perform the behavior." Moreover, it is not difficult to change one's plans. In fact, planning can easily – at will – take different routes without much effort. Therefore, we expect a relatively closer connection with the individual's volition and thus control in the IP case compared to the IE case. We also expect a relatively higher association with knowledge, since the individual is assumed to know more about his/her plans than external factors such as other persons plans. In addition, we expect that forming IP judgments involves more self-investment than forming IP judgments, since planning involves elements of activity in which the individual himself/herself is the agent (i.e., when I plan my future, *I* also make some kind of choice).

Moving further on to IW, the cognitive task (e.g., "To what extent do I *want* to return to the Hilton in Porto?") changes again. Compared to IE and IP, the number of external factors to consider is likely to decrease, since to "merely" want something is subject to few external restrictions. Thus, we are assuming that a relatively high level of control is involved in wanting things to happen in the future. Moreover, since my wants have a closer self-connection than the wants of people in the environment, and a closer self-connection than many external factors needed for a probability estimation, we assumed that the level of knowledge is relatively high in the formation of IW judgments. We also expect that what the individual wants matters more than what he or she expects will happen and what he or she plans to do, and thus that a relatively high level of self-investment is involved in the IW task. In addition, we assume that the individual is more attached to his/her wants compared to his/her expectations and plans, and given that attachment goes hand in hand with sense of ownership (cf. Carmon et al, 2003), we assume a relatively high sense of ownership in the case of IW. The relative frequency in empirical studies of the "items" people believe that they own also suggests that wants and desires are conceived of in terms of ownership to a larger extent than estimation of probabilities and plans (cf. Rudmin, 1994a). Moreover, it has been shown that "want" has a higher semantic proximity to the verb own than has "plan" (Rudmin, 1994b).

Thus, given that the strength of the attitude–intention association is affected by the correspondence between attitude and intention, that both attitude and satisfaction are evaluative judgments, that satisfaction is an entity with a relatively high sense of ownership, and that IE, IP, and IW are located at different points on the same sense of ownership continuum, we assume that the satisfaction–intention association becomes increasingly stronger as we move from IE to IP and then to IW. We turn now to our attempt to examine this assumption in empirical terms.

METHOD

Research Design

We selected one specific consumption act, having lunch at one particular restaurant, as the source of satisfaction and intentions responses, and the data were collected with a questionnaire. The respondent was instructed to select one particular lunch restaurant that he or she had been visiting during the past month, and s/he was asked

to answer the subsequent satisfaction and intention questions with this particular restaurant in mind. We included an open-ended item in the beginning of the questionnaire to capture the name of the selected restaurant, and our examination of the names revealed that very few respondents selected the same restaurant as any other respondent. This, then, means that stimulus heterogeneity was encouraged by our approach. The research design was an attempt to respond to an argument made by psychologists about stimulus sampling; it can be argued that if all respondents are exposed to the same stimulus, and only one stimulus, effective sample size may be reduced to $n = 1$ regardless of the number of respondents – which in turn threatens validity (cf. Wells and Windschitl, 1999).

The respondents ($n = 101$) were participants in seminars on customer satisfaction. Thus, we used a convenience sampling procedure. We distributed the questionnaires to the participants at the beginning of the seminar, we supervised the completion task, and we controlled the environment in the sense that no talking amongst participants was permitted. Moreover, responses to all questionnaire items were explicitly encouraged. This reduced non-response behavior to a minimum. In order to obtain variation in the satisfaction and intentions scores, four different groups of participants – who participated in seminars at different geographical locations – were included in the study (in the analysis, however, they were treated as one single sample).

Measures

Customer satisfaction was measured in two ways. First, the following question was asked: "Think about your accumulated experience during the past month of the selected restaurant. How would you summarize your impressions of the restaurant?" It was followed by three satisfaction items used in several national satisfaction barometers (cf. Johnson et al, 2001). Examples of specific studies in which the satisfaction scale consists of the three items are Anderson et al (1994), Fornell (1992), and Fornell et al (1996). These were the items: "How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the restaurant?" (1 = Very dissatisfied, 10 = Very satisfied), "To what extent does it meet your expectations?" (1 = Not at all, 10 = Totally), and "Imagine a lunch restaurant that is perfect in every respect. How near or far from this ideal do you find the selected lunch restaurant?" (1 = Very far from, 10 = Can not get any closer). Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .83, and we used the unweighted average of the responses to the three items as the measure (i.e., a reflective measurement approach was used). It should be noted that this object-oriented way of assessing satisfaction is different from the act-oriented way of capturing evaluations that is called for by many attitude theorists who are interested in predicting intentions with regard to an act (cf. Ajzen and Fishbein, 1973). Therefore, as a second (and act-oriented) measure of satisfaction, we asked the participants the following question: "How would you summarize your view of your decision(s) to have lunch at the selected restaurant during the past month?". The question was followed by three items: "I am happy about my decision(s) to go there", "I believe I did the right thing when I selected it", and "Overall, I am satisfied with the decision(s) to go there" (1 = Do not agree at all, 10 = Agree totally). Similar satisfaction measures have been recommended by Oliver (1997) and used by, for example, Butcher et al (2001) and Cronin et al (2000). In our case, alpha was .92, and we used the average of the responses to the three items as the (act-oriented) satisfaction measure.

In order to put the satisfaction–intention link into context, and since we are assuming that both satisfaction and attitudes are evaluative constructs, we included a *traditional attitude* measure to capture the respondent's overall evaluation of the selected lunch restaurant. We used a 5-item scale with 10 points and with adjective pairs common in marketing communications research (e.g., Mitchell and Olson, 1981). The question was worded as follows: "Which are your impressions of the restaurant, given your experience of it during the past month?". These adjective pairs were used to capture the responses: bad–good, dislike it–like it, unpleasant–pleasant, uninteresting–interesting, and negative impression–positive impression.

Alpha for this scale was .90. Again, the average of the scores on the five items was used as the measure in the subsequent analysis.

Turning to the intention measures, a decision had to be made about the use of multiple-item or single-item operationalizations. On the one hand, a single-item approach means that reliability in terms of internal consistency cannot be computed, and in the typical case no other reliability assessment is made. This approach, then, means that a measure with unknown reliability may have a low reliability, and low reliability in the measure of one particular variable is known to attenuate correlations with other variables (Peter, 1979). This argument was adopted in one of our previous attempts to examine differences between intention constructs; Söderlund (2003) developed multiple-item scales (three items in each scale) for intentions-as-expectations and intentions-as-plans and obtained acceptable levels of reliability in two different samples of participants. On the other hand, however, many assessments of the attitude–intention link have been made with single-item intention measures (Sutton, 1998). Courneya (1994), for example, argues that multiple-item measures invite the possibility of a confounded measurement. More recently, Rossiter (2002) has strongly argued that intentions should not be captured with multiple-item scales. In the present case, we were persuaded by his arguments to use single-item measures for the intention constructs. *Intentions-as-expectations* (IE) were assessed using the following statement: "I will have lunch at the restaurant during the coming month" (1 = Very unlikely, 10 = Very likely). Similar items, with an emphasis on probability/likelihood, have been used by Boulding et al (1993), Brady and Robertson (2001), Brady et al (2002), Cronin et al (2000), Gotlieb et al (1994), Krishnan and Smith (1998), LaBarbera and Mazursky (1983), Patterson et al (1997), Shim et al (2001), and Zeithaml et al (1996). *Intentions-as-plans* (IP) were assessed with the response to this statement: "I will choose to have lunch at the restaurant during the coming month" (1 = Do not agree at all, 10 = Agree completely). Intention items of this type, explicitly stressing "choose", appear in Ajzen (1971) and Taylor and Baker (1994). As indicated in the theoretical section on intentions-as-plans, however, other authors prefer items in terms of "will try to" (Ajzen and Madden, 1986), "will make an effort to" (Madden et al, 1992), "plan to" (Bagozzi and Yi, 1989; Bentler and Speckhart, 1979; Morwitz et al, 1993), "intend to" (Ajzen and Madden, 1986; Bagozzi and Yi, 1989; Mittal et al, 1998; Netemeyer et al, 1991; Terry and O'Leary JE, 1995), and "intend to try" (Bagozzi and Warshaw, 1990). Yet to date there is little empirical evidence about the potential for differences in the meaning of such items (except that some authors, who use multi-item scales in which several of these aspects are included, show that they are internally consistent in terms of high alphas). Finally, *intentions-as-wants* (IW) were measured with this item: "I want to have lunch at the restaurant during the coming month" (1 = Do not agree at all, 10 = Agree completely). Intention items with a specific "want-content" have been used by Fishbein and Stasson (1990) and Norman and Smith (1995). Questionnaire items based on "want" also appear in Bagozzi and Edwards (1998) and Perugini and Bagozzi (2001).

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Before we move to the main analysis, the assessment of the strength of the satisfaction–intention link for each of the three intentions constructs, it should be observed that we have assumed that the three intentions constructs represent three different ways for the individual to connect himself/herself with the future. At the same time, given that all of them are loaded with some level of sense of ownership (but not to the same extent), we expect them to be interrelated. That this is the case can be seen from an examination of the zero-order correlations between them; r = .89 for the IE–IP link, r = .70 for the IE–IW link, and r = .81 for the IP–IW link ($p < .01$ in each case). Thus, they share a significant amount of variance. On the other hand, however, they did not reach the same level in terms of absolute values. When the intention means were compared with each other, it could be seen that IE ($M = 7.21$) was higher than IP ($M =$

6.80), and that IP was higher than IW ($M = 6.14$). Indeed, all mean differences turned out to be significant ($p < .01$ in each case). This indicates, we believe, that the three constructs are tapping different aspects of the customer's connection to his/her future acts.

We assessed the strength of the satisfaction–intention link for each of the three intention variables with correlation analysis. As already noted, two satisfaction measures and one traditional attitude measure were used to capture the customers' evaluations. This means that it was possible to assess the evaluation–intention link with three evaluation variables and three intention variables. In total, then, nine bivariate correlation analyses were performed. The outcome is presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Zero-Order Correlations between the Evaluations and the Intention Variables[a]

Satisfaction (object-oriented)	Satisfaction (act-oriented)	Attitude (object-oriented)
Intentions-as-expectations (IE)		
0.392	0.443	0.343
Intentions-as-plans (IP)		
0.466	0.501	0.393
Intentions-as-wants (IW)		
0.598	0.621	0.538

a: all correlation coefficient are significant ($p < .001$)

Table 1 shows – as predicted – that the satisfaction–intention correlations are increasing in strength as we move from IE to IP and then further on to IW. This pattern is also consistent with Söderlund (2002) and Söderlund (2003) – and with previous studies in which the potential for differences in correlation strength was examined regarding attitudes (Fishbein and Stasson, 1990; Netemeyer and Burton 1990; Norman and Smith, 1995; Sheppard et al, 1988). It can also be seen in Table 1 that a similar pattern was obtained for the traditional attitude variable, and this adds some support to our belief that both satisfaction and attitude are evaluative variables.

The data in Table 1 also allow a comparison between object-oriented and act-oriented measures; in our case, the highest correlations with intentions were obtained with respect to the act-oriented satisfaction measure. This part of the pattern illustrates that it may indeed be worthwhile to pay attention to the traditional correspondence elements. That is to say, satisfaction with an act (having lunch at the restaurant) is doing a better job in predicting intentions to carry out the act again than satisfaction with the restaurant per se.

DISCUSSION

Summary of Main Findings

Previous research shows that different intention constructs covary unequally strong with attitudes and overt behavior (Fishbein and Stasson, 1990; Norman and Smith, 1995; Sheppard et al, 1988; Warshaw and Davis, 1985), and we can now add that satisfaction (in our view, one particular evaluation variable) is influencing different intention constructs with different degrees of strength. We assumed that the strongest association between satisfaction and intentions would be at hand when the intention is of the intentions-as-wants (IW) type rather than of the intentions-as-expectations (IE) and intentions-as-plans (IP) types. The data in this study suggest that this is the case for two common ways of conceptualizing satisfaction (i.e., an act-oriented way and an object-oriented way). The data also suggest a similar pattern when a traditional attitude variable is used for predicting intentions.

Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

Given that entities in the attitude-intention-behavior chain must be subject to a high level of correspondence in order to correlate strongly, that sense of ownership is a correspondence element, and that sense of ownership is not equally strong for satisfaction and the three intentions constructs, we are not surprised by the patterns obtained in this study. One obvious limitation, however, is that *we* (the researchers) allocated the entities to various positions on a sense of ownership continuum. Thus, the extent to which satisfaction

and the intention constructs actually differ – in the minds of the respondents – was not assessed empirically. Clearly, an important task for future research is to do better than this. One way is to develop questionnaire items for assessing respondents' judgments of intentions (and satisfaction) in terms of the three determinants of sense of ownership (control of the object, intimate knowledge of the object, and self-investment in the object); this will allow for the use of sense of ownership as a moderating variable.

Future research must also examine other characteristics of the entities (e.g., degree of formation, volition, and accessibility) than sense of ownership, since such characteristics may explain why the correlations are not equally strong. Moreover, these characteristics are likely to be interrelated in cause-and-effect terms, and future research needs to untangle this causal web before the final word is said about why the strength in satisfaction–intentions associations are different for different intention constructs.

Another limitation is that our approach allows us to say little about how the intentions constructs are related to each other in conceptual terms. Wanting a future act, for example, may influence the planning of the act (an assumption made in Perugia and Bagozzi, 2001), and planning may affect the perceived likelihood of the act. It is also possible, particularly from a consistency theory point of view, that one's expectations regarding the likelihood that an act takes place may affect planning activities and wants. This calls for a process approach to studying the formation of intentions. Above all, since our results suggest that all forms of intentions should not be considered the same, future research ought to pull the intention construct apart and develop typologies that include more intention constructs than those in focus in this paper. Consider, for example, propositions linking the individual with his/her future of the following type: "I have already decided to do X", "I must do X", "I need to do X", and "I will consider doing X" (this is an intention measure that is sometimes used in commercial studies); how are they positioned vis-à-vis the three constructs used in this paper?

Managerial Implications

One main implication of this study is that the investigator who is examining the link between satisfaction and intention should select the intention measure with care, since the link's strength appears to be dependent on how intentions are measured. And the link's strength, in turn, has important implications for decision making. For example, a weak correlation between a satisfaction measure and an intention indicator may be interpreted as a weak causal link. The logical decision in this case, given that customer loyalty is an important objective (and given that intention is equated with loyalty), would be to abandon activities designed to enhance customer satisfaction.

In fact, in order to avoid dependency on one single indicator given the present state of knowledge about intentions, we believe that a multi-intention construct approach is more viable. The main advantage, particularly for marketers who are interested in customer loyalty, is that it offers a more detailed picture of the customer's view of his/her future. That is to say, differences in levels between different intentions in the mind of a customer (or in customer segments) may provide important information. Some customers, for example, may have strong wants but low behavioral expectations, whereas other customers have strong expectations but weak wants. And segments defined in those terms are likely to call for different activities in order to create stronger intentions.

Furthermore, if a single intention construct is preferred, it may appear as if intentions-as-expectations are superior – since previous research suggests that they predict behavior better than intentions-as-plans (cf. Sheppard et al, 1988). After all, it is the customer's *behavior* (not attitudes or intentions) that produces revenues and costs. Marketers, however, must ask themselves which behavior is most desirable: is it behavior resulting from intentions with a low sense of ownership, or behavior reflecting intentions with a high sense of ownership? This distinction may perhaps be insignificant in the short run, since both types of behavior produce outcomes in terms

of revenues and costs. But in the long run, the case may be different. If marketers want highly loyal or strongly committed customers over time, intentions associated with a high sense of ownership appear to be a particularly useful marketing target. The main reason is that sense of ownership is assumed to go hand in hand with customer variables such as motivation and positive affect (cf. Pierce et al, 1991). It is also likely that target levels formulated in terms of different intention constructs produce different levels of challenge (and thus motivation) for employees. More specifically, it seems to be more inspiring to work for a firm that strives for a high level of wants ("Our target is that our customers should want to come back!") compared to a firm striving for a high level of expectations ("Our target is that our customers should expect to come back..."). The marketer who cares for strong loyalty and commitment in the long run, then, may be advised to pay more attention to IW than IE and IP.

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Send correspondence regarding this article to:
Magnus Söderlund
Center for Consumer Marketing
Stockholm School of Economics
P.O. Box 6501
SE-113 83 Stockholm
SWEDEN
fax: 46-8- 33 94 89
email: magnus.solderlund@hhs.se