



Keeping Customers Shopping in the Store: Interrelationships among Store Attributes, Shopping Enjoyment, Place Attachment, and Store Loyalty

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With consumers shifting to Internet and mobile shopping, the demand for brick and mortar store shopping has decreased and in response, several major U.S. retail chains have downsized the number of their physical retail operations (Farfan, 2013). Yet, retailers have not completely said good bye to stores. Indeed there may be several key store attributes that retailers' can focus on and continue to develop if they are interested in keeping customers shopping and buying in brick and mortar stores. Thus, the purpose of this research was to identify and test variables that contribute to customer's willingness to continue to shop in brick and mortar stores, hereafter referred to as store loyalty. Specifically, we examined the interrelationships among store attributes, shopping enjoyment, place attachment, and store loyalty.

Conceptual Framework: In the context of apparel retailing, this study extends prior research on perceived store attributes (Turley & Milliman, 2000) by incorporating place attachment theory (Williams, Patterson, Roggenbuch, & Watson, 1992) developed in the area of environmental psychology. Store attributes were conceptualized as stimuli that can exert either a cognitive or affective influence on a store's customers resulting in behavioral responses. Shopping enjoyment was defined as the extent to which the shopping experience with a store is perceived to provide reinforcement in its own right, going beyond performance consequences (Childers, Carr, Peck, & Carson, 2001). Place attachment was conceptualized as having a second-order factor structure composed of place identity, place dependence, and social bonding. Store loyalty was operationalized as behavioral loyalty, including allocating a higher share of wallet and repeat patronage and purchasing intentions. Specific hypotheses tested in this study were:

- H1: Perceived store attributes predict shopping enjoyment.
- H2: Shopping enjoyment predicts place attachment.
- H3: Shopping enjoyment predicts store loyalty.
- H4: Place attachment predicts store loyalty.

Methods and Participant characteristics: Data were collected using a web questionnaire with the help of a marketing research company. A total of 625 apparel shoppers recruited by Researchnow participated. Participants were asked to recall the most recent apparel store they patronized. Next, they completed a questionnaire making reference to the store they had identified. To reduce measurement artifacts, dependent variables were assessed prior to their predictors. Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 85 years with 61.0% between 18 and 55 years. Slightly more than half of the participants were female (61.0%). With respect to ethnicity, 82.9%

were Caucasian. All income categories were represented with a median income of \$25,000-\$49,999. Slightly under half (43.4%) of the participants had a four-year college degree and over half (65.0%) were married or lived with a partner.

Results: Store attributes were tested as eight exogenous constructs: (a) product (e.g., “The quality of the products available in this store is high.”); (b) price (e.g., “This store offers good discounts.”); (c) service (e.g., “I rate the quality of the service in this store as very high.”); (d) location (e.g., “The location of this store from my home is very convenient.”); (e) facility (e.g., “Parking is not a problem at all at this store.”); (f) design (e.g., “This store is well designed.”); (g) atmosphere (e.g., “The atmosphere of this store is entertaining.”); and (h) leisure (e.g., “This store provides interesting events that I can participate in.”). Confirmatory factor analysis was used to simultaneously test the convergent and discriminant validity of the set of measures. All the factor loadings on constructs within the measurement model were significant ($p < .001$) and all R^2 exceeded .50, in support of convergent validity. Discriminant validity of the scales was indicated by the fact that the variance extracted estimates exceeded the square of the phi estimates for all constructs. The structural model exhibited a good fit with the data ($\chi^2 = 1045.61$ with 625 df , $\chi^2/df = 3.12$, CFI = .94, NNFI = .93, RMSEA = .058, and SRMR = .062). Regarding H1, atmosphere ($\beta = .38$, $t = 8.59$), price ($\beta = .25$, $t = 5.28$), and leisure ($\beta = .17$, $t = 4.43$) were significant at $p < .001$, followed by design ($\beta = .20$, $t = 3.01$) at $p < .01$ and service ($\beta = .11$, $t = 1.32$) at $p < .05$. In H2-H3, shopping enjoyment had a significant effect on both place attachment ($\beta = .66$, $t = 16.63$) and store loyalty ($\beta = .35$, $t = 7.01$) at $p < .001$. For H4, place attachment was found to be a significant predictor of store loyalty ($\beta = .40$, $t = 8.16$) at $p < .001$.

Implications and Conclusions: This study confirms the notion that it is shopping enjoyment that can make consumers leave their Internet shopping cart behind and shop brick-and-mortar stores. Our findings also suggest that apparel retailers can cultivate their customers’ place attachment and ultimately store loyalty to their stores by enhancing shopping enjoyment. In order to enhance shopping enjoyment, retailers need to create a store environment and atmosphere that enables them to experience the various recreational dimensions while shopping. In addition, advertising and other communication efforts designed to keep customers should not only focus on pricing competitiveness and quality service a store offers but also extol the experiential aspects of shopping at the store.

References

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